

NEWSLETTER

Cymdeithas Ddinesig Bro Porthaethwy

Menai Bridge and District Civic Society

CYLCHLYTHYR

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Dates for your meeting diary, any Internet links to be issued closer to the day. All meetings are in the War Memorial Community Centre, Water Street, Menai Bridge, Start at 7.00 p.m.

10th September, Saturday 2—5 p.m. Garden Party at Plas Cadnant. To be opened by Tudur Owen

22nd September Thursday 7.00 p.m. Annual General Meeting. War Memorial Community Centre followed by a talk from Frances Llewellyn entitled, **'Bangor's housing—1850s to Margaret Thatcher'**

13th October 2022 Thursday Kelly Parry, Anglesey Archivist, **'Re-introducing the Archives'**

Thursday 10th November 2022, 7.00 p.m. Stewart Hayter, 'Copper Mountain—the Microsoft of Yesterday'

Thursday 8th December Cadi Iolen, Curator Llanberis Slate Museum, **'Five decades of collecting—pum degawd o gasglu'**

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MENAI BRIDGE FAMILIES

In our last Newsletter we mentioned briefly how some families have lived in the town for generations and have a proud history of hard work and serving the community. We continue this theme by looking at some of the 'newcomers', the Essex Connection. By newcomers I mean newcomers in the second half of the 1800s when a group of six families, who were closely connected with the sea moved to Menai Bridge from Essex. 'They were the Leavett, London, Payne, Rice and Tyrrell families. They were referred to by John Gray Hughes as the 'tall gaunt people from Essex'. The first Leavett was a fisherman, laying lobster pots and oyster baskets under the Britannia Bridge and running a fish shop. After WWI, in which one son was killed, the other son went to work for the Davies family of Treborth Hall. And one of the grandsons started the boat building yard in Beaumaris, later he became Inspector of Lifeboats for Ireland. The London family became Trinity House pilots on the Strait and were employed on the large private yachts based in Menai Bridge—the Isolda and the White Eagle. The Payne family were also very much involved with fishing and ferrying yachtsmen

to their craft. They also kept the Manchester Arms (now the Tool Hire shop). The Rice family also had a fishing shop but in addition sold paraffin. One daughter Lily, was mainly in the shop and her husband was the AA patrolman who rode a motor bike and sidecar. Her sister Cissie married John Gray Hughes, the pier master'. (Thanks to Maureen Parry-Williams for these brief notes). But why move from

Fishing Smack off Benllech Bay 1906



Essex to Menai Bridge? Were they looking for work, head hunted, or what? We know that the families were skilled fishermen, probably involved with fishing for Oysters and from a staunch nonconformist background. Anglesey and the then Caernarfonshire had prosperous oyster farming / dredging businesses (see page 4).

WHAT EVER NEXT, OR NOT?

The paragraph below is a reprint of what was in our last Newsletter and indeed similar comments and questions over the years. A sad state of affairs! We will call a **Public Meeting** to be held at the latest in the New Year to discuss the what is happening to the **Moreia Chapel site** and see if we can get to the bottom of what's going on, or rather not going on with derelict sites in Menai Bridge. Come and tell us what you think. "Section 215 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 still applies to this site. i.e. it is a derelict site within a Conservation Area, on a main road, in a public area, it affects the AMENITY of the area and its residents."

So what's next? We understand that no plans have been submitted as yet for the development of the site—it remains an idea that the County Council and the site owner, R.L.Davies Ltd are looking at.

They've been looking at this, trying to find a solution to meet the needs of the Town, the Council, the Owner and the Developer for about the past 15 years. How about the needs of the Townspeople during that time and in the future?

Councillors, planners, owners and townspeople will be invited to the **Public Meeting**. What questions would you like to ask? Use our Website at menaicivicsociety.org.uk to send in your questions or see the contacts on page 4.

50th ANNIVERSARY OF THE SOCIETY

In our last issue we reflected on the work of the Society over the past 50 years. For the next few issues we want to look at the future. What are we going to do? What will set the tone for the years to come. Recording and conserving our history is an important part of what we do but it is set in the context of future plans for the Town. What are the major challenges it faces? Will the derelict sites be rebuilt and with what? Do we want a hotel, housing for local people, a supermarket a combination of all three or a village green?

The magnificent Chapels and Churches that have defined the Town landscape in more ways than one, are being re-purposed. Is it enough that the shell or the façade of the buildings is maintained? Could they provide facilities or homes in the community, serving the community i.e. more akin to their original purpose. What about the inside of the buildings representing or providing some of the finest workmanship and musical instruments anywhere in Wales? What can we save, what should we save?

Re-purpose shouldn't become the polite word for gutting a building and selling the contents to make kitchen cabinets or cramming in yet more holiday homes! We're better than that surely?

At the time of writing extensive planning applications have been submitted for the Victoria Hotel, Capel Mawr, Chateau Rhianfa. The Presbyterian Church is for sale. The Mostyn Arms on Fordd Cynan has been sold at auction, what will that become? What will be the response to the application to demolish Treiddon on Beach Road and replace it with a modern, flat roofed copper coloured framed building, also planned for Dale Street. Plans for the old derelict site that was the Moreia Baptist Chapel are an unknown—what sort of nonsense is this!

What has happened to the Council's Conservation Area Plan for the Town and the planning advice it provides?

Liz Moyle

RECENT PROGRAMME NOTES

April 12th, Tuesday, 2.30 p.m. The War Memorial Community Centre is 100 years old this year.

We started off our first 'real' meeting for a while with tea and Bara Brith. How lovely to meet up and have a chat again. Cllr. S Williams, who has been involved with the management of the Centre for many years explained



Some Society members outside the War Memorial Community Centre

about its establishment as a Memorial to those from the Town who died in WWI.

One of the driving forces behind the Committee was Mr H. R Davies, formerly an army recruiting officer for the area. Refurbish-

ment of this busy focal point for the town continues with the roof undergoing repair.

The Bowling Club Pavilion, under the aegis of the Town Council, has also been transformed. Sadly the 'Lookout' has been fencing off since we visited. It has been subject to persistent



Bowling Green fenced off

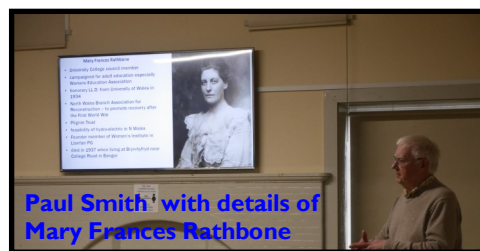
vandalism and the roof needs major work. Let's hope that it will be back in use soon. It is one of the iconic 'Art Deco' images of Menai Bridge, although built in 1953. The Townspeople raised the money to erect it and the maintenance was

May 17th, Tuesday, Llandegfan Parish Hall (Grade 2 listed Arts and Crafts) then to St Tegfan's Church (Grade 2 listed, original site dating to 1254).

What a full and interesting afternoon! We started off with an introduction

to the Parish Hall and the philanthropic Rathbone Family who donated the striking Art Deco Hall to Llandegfan. The same family who

are remembered in Rathbone Hall part of the University, Bangor. After that we made our way down to the Church, met a vicar from Llandudno who was walking from Chirk to Caernarfon, in stages, to raise money for Christian Aid. The Church Committee provided a wonderful afternoon tea and Church members explained more about the history of the building; in its time the pre-eminent church of the area. We had a good number of visitors as well as Society members to this event—visitors are always welcome. On this occasion we decided that any fees for non members



Paul Smith with details of Mary Frances Rathbone



Below, Jane Cherrett and Society Members in Llandegfan Church



should be added to donations and raised £138 for Christian Aid. Also

see page 4.

FUTURE EVENTS

Welcome back to the Autumn Programme of the Civic Society. How good to be able to say that! Whether it is by regulation or advice Covid is still out there, we owe it to our speakers, people helping at meetings and yourselves to be careful.

For the Garden Party and 'face-to-face meetings, much as we would like to see you, please don't come if you have Covid or cold symptoms.

Meetings will be held in the War Memorial Community Centre, Water Street, Menai Bridge to start at 7.00 p.m. on a THURSDAY.

Please note the change of day for our regular evening meetings, they are now on **THURSDAY**, as this is when the Centre is available.

Reminders will be sent out by email the week before a meeting. If you don't have email you may telephone Jane Cherrett on 07812186119 or Liz Moyle on 01248 712324 for the latest information.

SATURDAY, 10th SEPTEMBER 2022, GARDEN PARTY AT PLAS CADNANT from 2.00pm-5.00 pm

After a gap of two years we are delighted to be able to hold our Garden Party once more. Many thanks to Anthony Tavernor for his hospitality. The Garden Party is the **start of our 50th Birthday** Celebrations. Tickets are available beforehand, at reduced rates, from the Post Office, Plas Cadnant or TicketSource at <https://www.ticketsource.co.uk/menai-bridge-and-district-civic-society>

The draft Programme for the Garden Party is enclosed or attached.

Programme notes continued.

June 21st Tuesday. Visit to the new Oriel and shops at Cei Llechi - the Old Harbour Master's Office, Slate Quay, Caernarfon. Seated round the enormous table in the Board Room we had a short introduction to the work of Galeri, a guided tour of the 'new' site from Steffan Thomas and then went down to the Galeri Theatre complex for lunch. Later we walked round the old part of the town to view some of the properties Galeri has restored and repurposed. Galeri has made a significant impact on revitalising Caernarfon. We could learn from them.

Part of Cei Llechi is a Museum, presenting information about the commercial life of Caernarfon, the export of slate driving the growth of the town in the 1800s. We were lucky to be joined by Norah Davies, from Caernarfon Civic Society whose family has lived in Caernarfon for many years. She pointed out a picture of her grandfather, Morris Davies, on one of the display exhibits. He, as his father before him worked on the Quay, as 'hobblers', loading slate. The family moved to Caernarfon from Cilgwyn when their small scale slate mining business, using donkeys for transporting the slate, was overtaken by mechanisation and the coming of the horse drawn railways moving slate from Nantlle direct to the port. Hearing something of the family history brings the information to life. Their close involvement with the Chapels with their Sunday Schools providing classes and education that was not otherwise available or affordable. Independent and determined the

Thursday SEPTEMBER 22nd 7.00 p.m. ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING at the War Memorial Community Centre, followed by a talk from **Frances Lynch Llewellyn, MBE, MA, FSA, Chair Anglesey Antiquarians** entitled, 'Bangor's housing 1850s to Margaret Thatcher'.

Thursday 13th October Kelly Parry, MA, Senior Archivist Anglesey County Council - 'Re-introducing the Archives.'

Thursday 10th November Stewart Hayter — Copper Mountain—the Microsoft of yesteryear. (Former RAF officer, pilot, logistician and explosives specialist. A hotelier and senior manager in the Defence Industry; with wife Karen, lived and worked for many years in the Middle East.)

Stewart Hayter has added, 'Today many people come to marvel at the incredible lunar landscape and colours of what was the centre of the world's Copper production. The story of the mine is inextricably linked with a local man, Thomas Williams, an amazing entrepreneur. On the back of the copper mountain he built a huge business empire, at the time when just moving from A to B was a challenge. He became one of the richest men in the country as one of the leaders of the Industrial Revolution.

Thursday 8th December Cadi Iolen Jones-Roberts, MA, Curator, The National Slate Museum, Llanberis. '5 decades of collecting—5 degawd o gasglu.'

Jane Cherrett



movement for a Welsh settlement in Patagonia started in Engedi, the large chapel just at the back of the Slate Quay, now unfortunately derelict. The picture below shows one of the courtyards inside Cei Llechi with a seat made up of planks with the names of ships that sailed from the port. Until the introduction of buses and trains Caernarfon of course was the main town for the south west of Anglesey as people travelled more easily by ship.



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See our Website at
www.menaibridge
civicsociety.org.uk

MENAI BRIDGE FAMILIES continued from page 1.

They exported by train to Manchester and they too were centres for nonconformity. There was a fisherman's network of where employment was. Fishermen came to Anglesey from Jersey, Spain and Portugal for work as well, and their family names can still be found locally.

Increasing demand for oysters forced fishermen in Essex to fish further afield including on the dangerous Terschelling Island in the northern Netherlands. Even in 1891 the local minister, Revd Pertwee reported that 101 lives had been lost at sea, just from Brightlingsea, near Colchester, in the five years he had been there.

Essex fishermen had to cope with depleted stocks from overfishing and the dredgermen/fishermen ran a tight closed shop—a fishery run for the existing fishermen. Fresh supplies from Wales were sent to replenish the East coast.

In Wales oyster fishing was mostly found in Swansea Bay but also in North Wales in Porthdinllaen, Bardsey Island, St. Tudwal's Islands, Rhoscolyn, Llanddwyn Island, Caernarfon, Bangor Beaumaris and Puffin Island. Beaumaris sent 'pickled puffins' and the best pickled oysters from Penmon, in barrels, to London (Fortnum and Mason?).

Some idea of the extent and value of the Oyster Beds in Beaumaris can be judged from the letters written by James Howarth, wholesale Fishmarket, Manchester to Colonel Thomas Hampton Lewis, Mayor of Beaumaris, in 1880. Beaumaris Corporation controlled the leases on the oyster beds close to the Green and off Gallows Point. He wanted to increase his 'Welsh Trade' and is concerned that plans to take over some 4 acres worked by someone else have floundered. The cost of re-seeding the beds—£3700—was disputed. (£3700 is worth about £500,000 today). There was concern that control of the area would move out of local hands.

At the other end of the scale a local woman, Ellen Thomas, was found guilty, by jury, of stealing 50 oysters from near the Green, in 1859. She was sentenced to imprisonment—but thankfully for only 3 hours. Lenient—why in this case? There is much more we could write and find out we're sure. We'll add this to the 'Families Section' of our website. What could you add to the story?

The information comes from a variety of sources and so far includes:

Archives Dept, County Council, Llangefni, Maureen Parry-Williams, National Library, Aberystwyth, Michael Freeman—view his excellent site, looking at tourism in Wales, at sublimewales.wordpress.com Rachel Everett, Bridget Geoghegan and **Civic Society Photo Bank. Many photos from our collection will be on view at the Garden Party. If you could add names and dates to pictures we'd be delighted!**

Also do you have any photos of events in the Town in the 1940s, 1950s or 1960s? They could be an important record of what happened then. Bring them along to the Garden Party and if you're willing we can copy them. Original old photos, and by now they will be old, are best stored in specialist facilities that are temperature and humidity controlled. The picture of the fishing smack on the front page was one of several offered to the Society. We were able to copy them and then the donor has placed them in the Archives, Llangefni for safe keeping.

Programme notes extra—Llandegfan continued from page 3.



Hard at work in an overgrown part of Llandegfan Churchyard.

Following the visit to Llandegfan Church Paul Smith and Jane Cherrett set up a working group to clear some of the overgrown Churchyard. They have managed to uncover the splendid Celtic Cross which is part of Richard Reynolds Rathbone's grave. Quite fitting that his resting place can be viewed once more.

SUBSCRIPTIONS are due for 2022-23. Are you up to date? Please check cheques and Banker's Orders. You may pay using the link below to our Website menaibridgecivicsociety.org.uk/donations-and-subscriptions/ If you're not sure ask the Chair/Treasurer/Secretary or Committee Member please.

Newsletter Photos: N. Kneale, L. Moyle