

GWENT COUNTY HISTORY ASSOCIATION

NEWSLETTER

AUTUMN 2018

PUBLISH AND BE DAMNED

At its last meeting the GCHA committee discussed the role of the organisation. Over recent years various developments, including the completion of the 'Gwent County History' publication project and the merger with Gwent Local History Council made it important that we reviewed the core purpose of the organisation. It was agreed that while the Local History Council should continue with its role of supporting local history societies in the county, GCHA should focus on publication. This clearly includes continuing to publish the *Gwent Local History* journal. It also involves encouraging those who have never published before to get their work into print while maintaining a platform for more established historians. Contributors are advised that there is no minimum length for articles, no fixed 'house style' and our editor, Tony Hopkins, will provide necessary advice and assistance.

We are also exploring the possibility of publishing monographs, i.e. pieces of work which much longer and so could be published as short books, without impinging on the remit of the Monmouthshire Antiquarian Association.

HELP WANTED

GCHA is seeking fresh blood to join our committee. In particular we are seeking people to assist with our website and with secretarial duties (e.g. writing minutes). If you think you can help, get in touch.

RECOMMEND A FRIEND

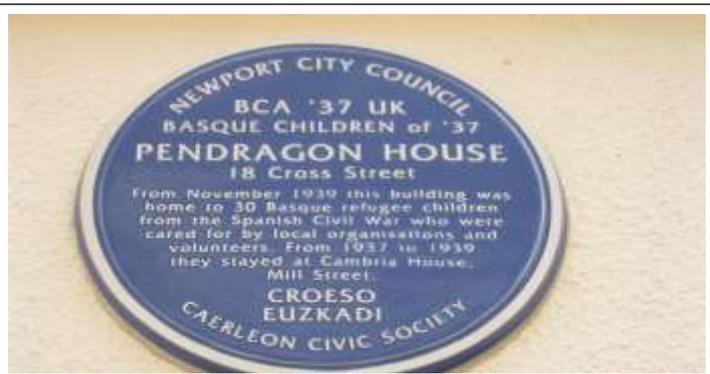
To keep on an even keel financially we need to increase our membership. Do you have a friend or colleague who might be interested in joining the Gwent County History Association and receiving the *Gwent Local History* journal? If so please send us their name and address and we will send them a complimentary back issue of the journal with an invitation to join.

1914-1918 CENTENARY 2014-2018

It was pleasing to see that the centenary of the armistice at the end of the First World War showed a marked increase in interest around the county. Remembrance parades were supported by record numbers in towns and villages throughout Gwent. Many communities organised their own commemorative projects.

Many local societies participated in the 'Journey's End' event at St Woolos Cathedral on November 10th. The event was attended by around 1000 people and with 20 stalls, a singer, two choirs, a brass band, five talks, two 'pop-up' exhibitions and a range of films, there was plenty to keep them occupied.

Members of Caldicot Local History Society worked very hard to keep visitors to the event fed and watered in their 'National Kitchen', serving 'munition workers' lunch', trench cake, war cake and ANZAC biscuits, using recipes from the time. 'National Kitchens' were municipal canteens sent up in 1918 as part of a plan to combat food and fuel shortages. Although the war ended before many were established, they became the model for the 'British Restaurants' set up in World War Two.



Plaque at Pendragon House, Caerleon (see overleaf)

HOW IT WAS THEN

Older readers who are convinced that libraries are much noisier than they used to be may be interested in the following, taken from the South Wales Argus, 11th January 1919:

Have readers at Newport Central Free Library been conscious of 'disorder'? 'Pro Bono Publico' complains, and makes a suggestion: 'I have been into all the principal public libraries in Britain and have not seen so much disorder as at Dock Street, Newport. In spite of a notice in black type six inches long requesting SILENCE, the loud talking is quite destructive of order, not to mention anything beyond the reading of literary trash. Sorry to say, women are the worst offenders. We have yet to learn the ABC of order, let alone manners; until this time it is futile to talk about making the world safe for democracy. If the brain is disorderly the actions are bound to be so. As the public are unable to control themselves, I suggest to the Library Committee that they appoint a disabled soldier to keep order in Dock Street. He should be authorised to remind the staff that a song exists entitled, "Whisper, and I shall hear".

AHEAD OF ITS TIME

"Newport Corporation General Purpose Committee recommends the adoption of the decimal system in this country in order to assimilate our currency with that of other countries."

-Western Mail, 6th October 1916.

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

***GCHA AGM Saturday 8th June 2019** St Michael's Centre Abergavenny.

***GCHA/Monmouthshire Antiquarians Day School Saturday 21st September 2019** Redwick Village Hall.

CONTACT US: Correspondence should be sent to: Peter Strong, GCHA, 8 Deepweir, Caldicot, Monmouthshire NP26 5JG strong@btinternet.com

SET IN STONE

During the summer GCHA representatives were invited to attend the unveiling of two plaques to commemorate the work that took place in two buildings.

On 6th July a plaque was unveiled at St Woolos Hospital, Newport, to mark its role as the biggest single section of any military hospital in Wales during the First World War. The plaque was erected as part of the Western Front Association's 'Journey's End' project and the unveiling was carried out by Lieutenant Colonel Simon Lawrence from 203 Field Hospital, based in Cardiff. The design is based on a painting by Margaret Lindsay Williams of wounded soldiers being treated in Cardiff in 1916.



Councillor Mark Whitcutt (Deputy Leader Newport City Council), Bronagh Scott (Director of Nursing, Aneurin Bevan Health Trust), Jane Bryant (Assembly Member, Newport West), Danielle Mayer (plaque designer), Colonel Simon Lawrence, Peter Strong and children from St Woolos School at St Woolos Hospital for the plaque unveiling ceremony.

On 11th July an unveiling of a replacement plaque was held at Pendragon House, Cross Street, Caerleon, which was home to Basque refugee children. 56 children arrived in Caerleon on 11th July 1937 and were initially housed in Cambria House (now demolished), with those who remained being moved to Pendragon House in 1939. Amongst the guests for the ceremony were 56 pupils from local primary schools