GWENT COUNTY HISTORY ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER SPRING 2021

FIND-MAP-SAVE

Ramblers Association launches 'Don't Lose your Way' campaign to safeguard historic footpaths

As local historians, access to our historic sites and landscapes is vitally important. Throughout lockdown one thing that we have been able to do is to explore local footpaths and rights of way.

An initiative by the Ramblers Association should therefore be welcomed. The Association's Find-Map-Save scheme aims to ensure that access to historic rights-of-way is preserved in advance of forthcoming changes to legislation.

At present, rights-of-way are identified on 'definitive maps' set up by local councils in the 1950s. From January 2026 new definitive maps will be issued. The old definitive maps will no longer give guaranteed rights of access. It is therefore essential that any 'lost' footpaths which appear on the existing maps are identified and reported.

To facilitate this the Ramblers Association has set up an excellent online tool which divides England and Wales into 150,000 1km squares and allows users to show a current map and a historic OS map side by side so that they can spot any differences and



submit details of missing paths. The Ramblers Association will then recruit volunteers to make applications to local authorities for these paths to be restored to the definitive maps before the 2026 deadline.

To 'do you bit' go to www.ramblers.org.uk and click on 'Don't Lose Your Way'.

2021 DATES FOR YOUR DIARY 2021

Day School

The annual Newport Chartist Convention is provisionally due to take place at St Woolos Cathedral Saturday 6th November. Speakers and other details will be announced shortly.

GET INTO PRINT

We are always on the lookout for articles for our journal, *Gwent County History*. There is no minimum length for articles and help will be given on matters such as style and editing. So don't hide that research under the bed, share it with the world! As well as being distributed to GCHA members, copies of our journal go to all four UK national libraries and to Harvard University Library in the USA.

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

ASHAMED OF OUR PAST?

There has recently been a lot of discussion about whether statues should be moved and street names changed if they celebrate individuals associated with slavery or colonialism. This has led accusations that we are being led to feel ashamed of our past.

Without taking sides in this dispute, it is worth noting that such accusations are not new. Writing about "Harold's Place" in Portskewett in the *South Wales Weekly Argus* on 2nd June 1966, Fred Hando commented:

"Now anyone over incipient middle age will have noted the sarcasm, the malicious joy, the slapstick sadism used by a certain group of historians towards the legendary and traditional figures who have enlivened and enriched the early annals of our land.

Of the saints –David, Gwynllyw, Cadoc, Maches, Tathan – of the heroes –Arthur, Tewdrig, Meurig, Davy Gam and scores more- we must become ashamed. "Wrap them in cellophane, bury them with mothballs, they are not worthy of you…."

It is not clear who these historians were. If you can identify any of them and have examples of their writings please let us know.

WITHOUT COMMENT

In 1834 the Abergavenny Cymmreigddion celebrated its first anniversary with an Eisteddfod. We print this extract from the *Monmouthshire Merlin* (29th November 1834) without comment but feel sure that our friends from Llanfoist Local History Society will have a different opinion:

"Mr Thomas Watkins carried away the reward for 'An Historical Description of the Parish of Llanfoist', a dry subject, but by the genius of this uneducated man made most interesting read."

EASTER 100 YEARS AGO

(from the South Wales Weekly Argus April 2, 1921)

"Easter is, par excellence, the season for taking to the road. From all parts of the country come the reports that never before have so many motor-cars been driven as during the past week-end, and this in spite of the uncertain weather and of the fact that, according to some authorities, there is a considerable slump in motoring.

If the touring car was noticeably abroad in greater numbers than ever before during the recent spell of fine weather its sudden leap forward into renewed popularity was a mere nothing compared to the equally sudden demonstration of charabanc motoring. Where all these huge vehicles have been stored during the winter I do not pretend to know, but wherever I went I encountered them in enormous force, and they were found on high road and by-road alike. Needless to say, there were occasions when they proved an almost intolerable nuisance, especially when a chain of three or four of them were proceeding along the road together in convoy formation, no doubt for company's sake for in these circumstances it was almost impossible to get past. On the whole, however, I think that the Easter motorist will have but little cause to complain of the manner in which them enormous vehicles were driven, though here and there, I have no doubt, cases of road hoggery cropped up."

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 for only £10 a year? Send us their name and address and we will send them a complimentary back issue of the journal with an invitation to join.

IMPORTANT NOTICE: Our bank has informed us that in future cheques must include our full name: Gwent County History Association. GCHA etc will not be accepted.