GWENT COUNTY HISTORY ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER SPRING 2022

WE MEET AGAIN

After two years in which we haven't held any face to face meetings or activities, GCHA is planning to get back to 'normal' again. A wide range of speakers has already been booked for the Annual Day School in July, held in conjunction with Monmouthshire Antiquarian Association and, this year, Oxford House Industrial Archaeological Society. The GCHA AGM will be on May 21st with an interesting lecture: see next column & www.gwenthistory.org.uk

At the AGM the committee will propose that membership fees should be increased from £10 per year to £15. Those from the same address who currently pay £12.50 will be able to renew their membership at £15 per household. The new fees would come into force from 2023.

The Committee is well aware that this is a difficult time for an increase. It is necessary because we have held the fees at £10 for many years, trying to absorb higher costs through efficiencies, such as delivering as many journals by hand as possible, which takes time (and fuel).

Sending out your copy of *Gwent Local History* is not cheap. Each journal costs £1.65 to post (having gone up from £1.53 on 4th April), and is likely to cost even more before long. This means that over 30% of your current membership fee goes on postage. Printing costs have also increased, but the main increase is due to the fact that the journal is now significantly bigger than in the past (better value!). Back in the 1990s the average issue had between 42 and 48 pages. Recent issues have over 75 pages. We hope you agree that your membership fee still represents good value for money and thank you for your continued support.

A GREAT LIFE

An episode of the BBC Radio 4 series 'Great Lives' in January feaured Lady Rhondda, famous (or infamous) for her activities as a Suffragette in Newport. She was nominated by Supreme Court judge Lady Hale and the expert witness providing information was Angela John, who has written a biography of Lady Rhondda. The programme can still be heard on BBC Sounds.

2022 DATES FOR YOUR DIARY 2022

GCHA ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING AND LECTURE
Saturday 21st May 2.30 at Torfaen Museum, Pontypool Park. Talk: Sue Jones (local pharmacist) on 'Pharmacy Whims and Whimsies'. You can also visit the Museum.

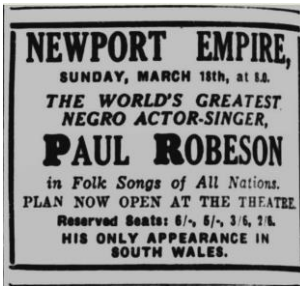
JOINT GCHA/MAA DAY SCHOOL
Hosted by Oxford House Industrial Archaeological Society. Saturday 2nd July 10.00-4.00 at Oxford House, Risca. The programme is on the website.

BLAENAU GWENT HERITAGE FORUM DAY SCHOOL
Saturday 15th October. Theme: Art and Artists. Speakers to be announced. Venue: Ty Ebbw Fach, Chapel Rd, Six Bells, Abertillery NP13 2ND.

NEWPORT CHARTIST CONVENTION
Saturday 5th November, St Woolos Cathedral. Details to be announced.

PAUL ROBESON IN NEWPORT

We recently received query asking whether Paul Robeson had ever visited Newport. It is well known that he filmed 'Proud Valley' in Wales in 1939 and that he was guest of honour at the National Eisteddfod at Ebbw Vale in 1958. A quick search of the online British Newspaper Archive revealed that he had also toured Wales in 1934 and had indeed performed in Newport. At the concert he sang a number of spirituals plus folk songs from Wales and Russia, concluding with 'Ole Man River'. The Western Mail was fulsome in its praise for his 'splendid voice', 'rich artistry' and 'pleasant personality'.


NEWPORT EMPIRE,
SUNDAY, MARCH 18th, at 8.0.
THE WORLD'S GREATEST NEGRO ACTOR-SINGER,
PAUL ROBESON
in Folk Songs of All Nations.
PLAN NOW OPEN AT THE THEATRE.
Reserved Seats: 6/-, 5/-, 3/6, 2/6.
HIS ONLY APPEARANCE IN SOUTH WALES.

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.

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

BRIAN FOSTER

We have been saddened to hear of the death of Brian Foster, who for many years was Secretary of the Abersychan and Garndiffaith Local History Society.

Brian spent over three decades visiting Gwent Record Office (as it was then) and Newport Reference Library collecting articles from local newspapers, many of which he republished in book form, including 'The Fascination of Old Newspapers: Eastern Valley Life and Times 1830-1869' and 'Eastern Valley Panorama 1830-1879'. He also published, 'Through a Glass, Darkly', a book of his own prose and poetry. In 2014 Brain was given an award for services to local history by GCHA. His certificate was placed on his coffin during his funeral. Brian's boundless energy, enthusiasm, knowledge, and love for his community will be missed by all who knew him.

SALT OF THE EARTH

By Brian Foster

Digging ditches, felling trees,
Gritting roads before they freeze,
Sweats and sniffles, sudden sneeze
Throaty coughs and chesty wheeze.

Deafened by the hammer blow,
Blinded by the furnace glow,
Swinging shovels to and fro,
Watch the piles of slurry grow.

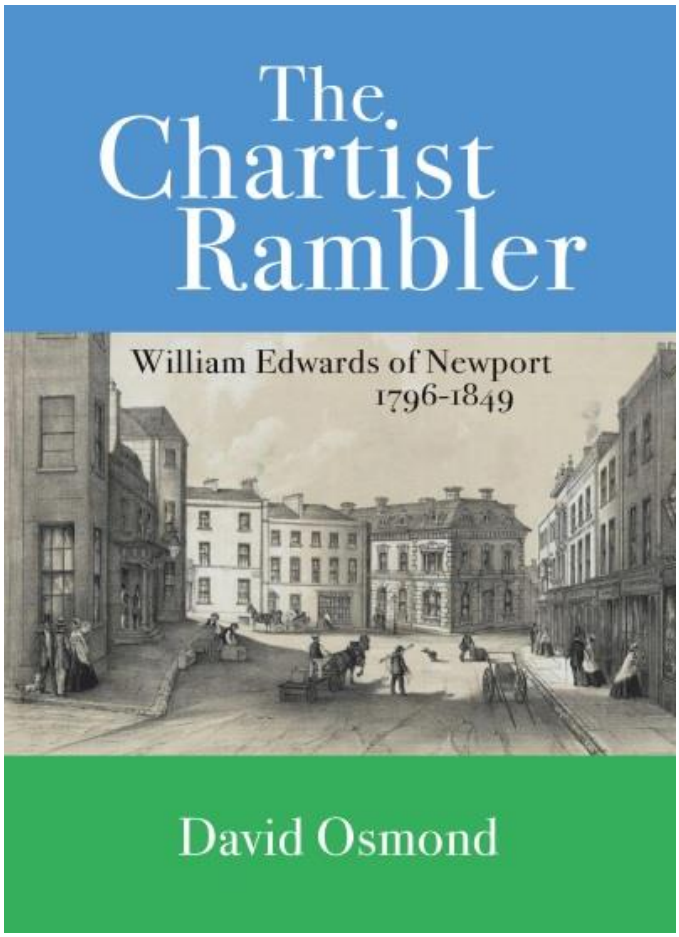
Deep in sewers, high in cranes,
Carting ashes, clearing drains,
Full of niggling aches and pains,
Soaking wet whenever it rains.

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 GCHA 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.

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 and to interested purchasers, copies of our journal go to all four UK national libraries and to Harvard University Library in the USA.



THE CHARTIST RAMBLER

Six Points Publishers

Adored by the people of the Monmouthshire valleys, twice gaoled for sedition, burnt in effigy by his former supporters; preacher, baker, bookseller: William Edwards had a turbulent and eventful life during a period when the decayed medieval borough of Newport, reduced to little more than a riverside village, was rapidly growing into the biggest town in south-east Wales. Edwards was a major figure in the South Wales Chartist movement but today he is largely forgotten, his achievements overshadowed by the drama of the 1839 Newport Rising, which he instigated yet eluded due to his first spell in prison. This book tells his story and restores him to his rightful place in the history of the struggle for democratic rights.

The author, David Osmond, was born in Newport and educated at Newport High School. He obtained an MA in Local History at Cardiff University in 1994, and has had a long-term interest in the Chartist movement. This is his first book. Paperback, 120 pages, 10 illustrations and 1 map. Price £10.00 including postage and packaging. Available from: www.sixpointscardiff.com