

## **Notes from Local Interest Group Meeting 24<sup>th</sup> June 2021**

**Present:** Maureen Lloyd (ML), Dainis & Wendy Ozols, John & Margaret Price, Mike & Val Head, Doreen James, Elsa Harflett, Bronwen Jenkins, Joan Lloyd, Evelyn & John Bally, Jenny Francis, Jennifer Lewis, Cherry & Victor Williams, Joan Hughes, Shirley Meredith, Grace Davies, Gaynor Price, Janet Russell, Ann & Howard Dean, Sue & John Ievers, David & Anwyn Price, Roy Lloyd; and our hosts at Huntington – Joan Morgan, Margaret Lloyd, Colin Jones, Dorothy Jones, Gwen & Jenny Ingram.

**Apologies:** Helen Barnett

### **Visit to Huntington School and United Reformed Church**

ML welcomed everyone and thanked Joan Morgan for organising the visit for us. She introduced Joan Morgan, who had organised the evening for us, and Colin Jones and Margaret Lloyd who would be telling us about the school and chapel and some of the people associated with it.



### **Edward Goff (1735-1813) and the Establishment of Huntington School**

Colin Jones began by telling us how Huntington School came to be established. The school was founded in 1791 by the son of a local farm labourer, Edward Goff. Edward was born in 1735 in a small cottage close to the site of the present building. His family were poor and they could not afford to send him to school and so he was unable to read or write. However, his Aunt read bible passages to him and he remained a Christian all his life.

Edward worked on the land until he was 25 years old when he decided that he would like “to see more of the world” and he set off to walk the 150 miles to London! He first found work as a coal heaver for a merchant on the banks of the Thames, for which he was paid 12 shillings per week. He proved

himself to be a hard, honest and sober worker and impressed his boss, who eventually gave him the role of managing the retail part of his business. Under his management, the business prospered and so Edward's boss left him this side of the business when he died. With his new-found wealth, Edward bought some property (possibly in Brighton), but his love for Huntington remained.

Through his own efforts, he had taught himself to read and sign his name, but he was acutely aware of the lack of education facilities in rural areas and the fact that few children in places like Huntington would have had the opportunity to go to school. With this in mind, he used some of his wealth to set up Huntington School in 1791, along with a trust fund to pay for a teacher. He stipulated that the teacher must be a Christian who would teach the children during the week and preach the gospel on a Sunday. When Edward died, he left money to build a number of other schools, not all of which were successful, but ones at Gorsley and Hay did succeed. He died in Hay in June 1813 and, according to his request, he is buried in an unmarked grave in the town's churchyard.

### **Thomas Rees (b. 1774 in Pembrokeshire, died 1858)**

Margaret Lloyd told us that when the school was built in 1791 it was supposed to have room for 100 pupils, but at times there were up to 170 on the school roll. In 1802, an application was made to Carmarthen College for a qualified master. Thomas Rees had been known to Edward Goff since he was a youth, and Goff had a great deal of respect for him. Thomas had been well educated by his parents and this qualified him for the post, but he was completely unimpressed by Huntington on his first visit to the place and he vowed that he would not return. However, he must have changed his mind, because he did take up the position, believing it "to be the will of God". He was 28 years of age and single, but he soon married a local girl called Mary Evans in September 1804 (she was only 16 at the time). They had nine children and some of their descendants still live locally ("Gwen Ingram - Babs" and "Dorothy Jones - Doss" were amongst our hosts for the evening).

Thomas would go around the local villages preaching, often in the open air. He was not always made to feel welcome however: in Eardisley he was shot at; in Gladestry they let a bull and a colt loose amongst the crowd and then rang the church bells so loudly that they would drown out his sermon. He was often accompanied on his preaching missions by a young lady called Miss Thomas from Kington. Those who tired of his "blood and thunder" style were often heard to shout, "Keep quiet – let the woman speak!" So fraught with danger were his preaching missions that his wife, Mary, often pleaded with him not to go, especially not to Eardisley, Painscastle or Brygwyn, where "he had been in jeopardy of his life", but he replied that he was ready to go "and suffer death if necessary!" In fact, he went more frequently to the places where they were more hostile. In 1804, a church was formed at Huntington and worship took place in the schoolroom until 1818 when the present church was built. Thomas was a truly benevolent man and he gave £10 from his salary of £80 towards the cost of this building. He was considered a "model man" and when he died in 1858 many said, "We shall never see the like of him again".

### **John Henry Lloyd**

Colin continued the history of the school. On 11<sup>th</sup> January 1875, John Henry Lloyd took up the position of headmaster of Huntington School. By this time the school had been renovated and enlarged to meet Government standards and it qualified for Government grants. John Lloyd was described as "the proverbial new broom" and, as stipulated by Edward Goff, he preached on Sundays as well as teaching the children during the week. With his arrival, the number of children attending school began to increase, with 27 new pupils on the register by the end of his first month in post. Such was his reputation as a teacher that some pupils walked past other schools in order to attend Huntington.

However, he was a hard man and it is said that he would often "use the cane" (and his own sons got the same treatment, if not worse).

As required, Mr Lloyd kept a log book in which he recorded what happened in the school on a daily basis. There are records of successes and failures, but one of the main problems noted was that of absenteeism. This being a rural community, pupils were often required to help with jobs on the farms, such as potato planting and picking, hay making, stone picking in the fields and threshing, and it was also not uncommon for them to have to look after their younger siblings. Another problem was bad weather; heavy snow could lead to the school being closed as the children could not get there. As there was no NHS at the time, illnesses were rife and could lead to prolonged absences. The children were also given days off for special events such as Huntington Fair, or when the school had to be closed for a funeral.

Mr Lloyd was a bachelor when he arrived in Huntington in January 1875, but he soon found a wife and married Elizabeth Maria Jones in August of that year. They had three daughters and five sons. As the number of pupils in the school increased, it became necessary to have an assistant and Mr Lloyd's sister-in-law, Miss Mary Berry Jones, was taken on to teach the infants. Later on, after she had qualified, Mr Lloyd's daughter, Bertha, took on this role.

In 1904, Mr Lloyd stood for election for a place on Radnorshire County Council (even though Huntington is in Herefordshire), but he narrowly missed out on being elected. However, he put the success of his opponent down to the beer and spirits he had provided. In this same year, Mr Lloyd was created an Alderman. He died in 1911, aged 84, and was succeeded as head teacher by his daughter, Bertha.

### **Mary Anne Bertha Morgan (née Lloyd) – Head Teacher 1911-1953**

Margaret then went on to tell us about Bertha Lloyd. She was John Lloyd's eldest daughter and had been born in 1876. When she was 16, she had become a pupil teacher to help her father, but she received no salary because there were not enough children in the school to justify another teacher. During her time as pupil teacher, her father continued to teach Bertha and she learned how to play the piano and organ.

In 1896, Bertha won a Queen's Scholarship and embarked on a teacher training course at Mason's College in Birmingham. After qualifying, she gained a post at a school in Birmingham and four years later she got the post of Head of Peterchurch British School, one of those endowed by Edward Goff. However, she gave up this post to come and help her father at Huntington and, as his health deteriorated, she took on more and more responsibility. In 1910, she was appointed Temporary Head and then when John died in 1911 the trustees made her Head Teacher. The trustees hoped that the standards set by her father would not deteriorate as they wanted to keep the pupil numbers high; they had no need to worry because Bertha continued much as her father had.

In Bertha's long tenure as Head, there were two World Wars and she felt that it was important for the children to be kept abreast of what was happening. The school log book records that, on 21<sup>st</sup> September 1914, "The syllabus has been revised; instead of the British Isles, a general idea of the map of Europe has been given with particular attention to the seat of War, and some account of the history related thereto is given." The School Inspector suggested that, every day, "the last lesson should be devoted to the study and progress of the War." During the Second World War, Mrs Morgan used to read passages from the daily paper in order to keep the older pupils well informed about what was going on.

Bertha married the Reverend D J Morgan and they had two daughters, Dorothy (b. 1918) and Hilda (b. 1920). The school log book bears testament to the busy life she led. As well as being Head Teacher, she was Superintendent of the Sunday School, she was organist, she gave music lessons outside of school hours, she conducted and accompanied the choir and she was secretary of the WI when it started in Huntington. In addition, she had her family to look after, including her invalid sister, and a home to run.

By the early 1950s, children over the age of 11 were going off to secondary school and numbers of children attending Huntington School were therefore lower. The school and school house were in need of repair, but Edward Goff's legacy did not allow for the inflated cost of this maintenance work. Bertha's health was deteriorating as she got older and the salary that she was paid certainly would not have attracted any replacement for her. Sadly, therefore, the school closed on 30<sup>th</sup> July 1953.

At the end, ML asked whether any of those present had attended the school. Doreen James said that her husband, Dennis, had been a pupil, Joan Hughes and Joan Morgan had also been at the school. Gwen Ingram and her sister Dorothy Jones (née Powell) had been pupils and later Dorothy became a teacher of the infants, working alongside Bertha. They all agreed that they had enjoyed their time at the school. The musical side of their education had been particularly important; this was obviously one of Bertha's main interests.

There followed an opportunity to look inside the building where there were attendance registers, old school equipment, photos and articles about the school for people to look at. The building now resembles a chapel rather than a school room, but many of the pews are made from ingeniously adapted school desks (with the ink well holes quite visible still). In addition, members of the congregation had very kindly provided some delicious refreshments for us to enjoy whilst we looked around in small groups. The views from the new graveyard at the back were particularly lovely.

Special thanks must go to Joan Morgan who kindly organised the visit for us. We are also extremely grateful to Colin Jones and Margaret Lloyd for telling us about the history of the school and the Head Teachers. Thank you to all three of them, and also to Dorothy Jones, and Gwen and Jenny Ingram for making us feel so welcome on what was a most enjoyable evening. We all agreed that this was a truly lovely and peaceful place.