

Notes from Local Interest Group 29th February 2024

Present in Hall: John Price (JP), Maureen Lloyd (ML), Joan Lloyd, Mike & Maisie Anthony, David & Anwyn Price, Jenny Francis, Alison Duncan, George & Eleanor Watkins, Janet Russell, Roy & Avryl Lloyd, Jenny Smith, Edwina Griffiths, Victor & Cherry Williams, Grace Davies, Elsa Harflett, Bronwen Jenkins, Joan Hughes, Celia Jones, Mollie Moore, Robert Davies, Gina Goodge, Sue Lawler, Malc Gonnella, Richard Thomas

On Zoom: Wendy Ozols, Llewelyn Breese, Angela Jones, Jennifer Lewis, Sylvia Illingsworth, Margaret Evans, Margaret Price, Diana Lloyd, Howard and Ann Dean, Angela Swindell, Evelyn Bally

Apologies: Dainis Ozols

ML welcomed everyone and explained that the evening would take the form of a number of presentations, audio and visual, kindly put together for us by John Price.

We started by watching a short film about “**Geraldine the Mole Catcher**”. Geraldine, aged 12 in 1986, explained that she had got into mole catching when she was about six or seven years old because she had gone out with her father and had enjoyed the experience. She explained how to catch a mole by finding a run and digging down into the “tunnel” with a trowel. She said that she had caught five or six moles in the field where they were standing. When asked why the moles needed to be caught, she explained that the “tumps” created by the moles as they tunnel harm the ground. Farmers are very pleased to be rid of the moles and (in 1986) she was paid £1 for each mole she caught. Geraldine said that she might like to be a mole catcher when she grew up.

Following on from this, John played us some audio recordings of people living in the Painscastle and Rhosgoch area in 1981. They talked about their way of life and what they enjoyed about living in such a beautiful place.

The History of the Baskerville Family by Julia Hopton

The next item was a recording of a recent talk given to Hay U3A by Julia Hopton, who had given her permission for this to be shown to LIG.



This shows all the coats of arms of the various families who married into the Baskervilles up to the 19th century.

Julia started by showing the Baskerville family crest and coat of arms. She explained that it included three wimberries, which are commonly found on the hills in the local area. The wolf's head, with a sword going through it, was also chosen because (at the time) there were also wolves found locally. The family's motto is “Spero ut Fidelis”, “Hope through Faith”.

The de Bacqueville family were originally from Normandy and came over to England in 1066 with William the Conqueror. The family was given land in Herefordshire after the Conquest of Herefordshire and Sir Robert Baskerville built a castle at Eardisley and another at Bredwardine. Sir Robert married Agnes, granddaughter of the Prince of Wales. Their son, Sir Ralph Baskerville, married the daughter of Lord Clifford. A duel between Ralph Baskerville and Lord Clifford is described in some books, which may have taken place in Llowes churchyard?

From the end of the 12th century until the time of the Civil War (1642-1651), the family acquired more land, in Herefordshire, Gloucestershire and Wiltshire. Julia told us that it is very difficult to follow the family history because the Baskervilles seldom change their Christian names and this makes research very difficult.

In the 17th century, James Baskerville acquired lands as far as Aberedw. He married Elizabeth Griffin and they had a son called Thomas who married a local girl called Sybil Collins who was possibly a daughter for Thomas Collins, Great House, Bryngwyn. Their son, also called Thomas, married Meliora, who was a distant cousin of his if you go back seven generations. Their son (also called Thomas) died in 1748 before coming of age and so all of the estates went to his sister, Philippa, who had married a local vicar, Rev John Powell, who had inherited the Clyro estate. So, now the Aberedw and Clyro estates were linked in one property. Their daughter, Meliora, married Peter Rickards Mynors of Treago in Herefordshire in 1787. He had taken the name Mynors because he had inherited the Treago estate. Meliora and Richard had two sons, the elder was also called Richard and he inherited the Treago estate. The younger son was Thomas Baskerville Mynors and he inherited the Clyro and Aberedw estates, and he also had an estate in Wiltshire which he had inherited from Colonel Thomas Baskerville. In order to inherit this estate, he had to take the name Baskerville rather than Rickards.

Thomas Baskerville was a very wealthy young man. Initially he lived near Marlborough in Wiltshire but he decided to rebuild the house in Clyro because he did not think that the existing one was grand enough for him. Clyro Court, the house which exists today, was completed in 1839. Having lived in Wiltshire, Thomas obviously has a love of the county's architecture and particularly the Cotswold stone that was used in buildings there. This is why this stone can be seen in the façade of the present building. The stone was brought from Wiltshire to Clyro by barge along the Avon, into the Severn and then the Wye to Hay, from where it was transported by horse and cart. Thomas wanted to be a local benefactor and so he decided to make new pews for the church in Clyro. The solid oak pews that had been in the church were removed and can be seen in the oak panelling inside Clyro Court. The pine pews that he had replaced them with can still be seen in the church today!



A painting of Clyro Court in the 1840s soon after it was built in 1839. The painting is by Thomas Lindsay 1794-1861

Thomas married twice, to ladies from Marlborough. His first wife, Anne Hancock, died childless. He then married Elizabeth Mary Guise, the daughter of a wealthy Marlborough banker. Together, Thomas and Elizabeth had six children, three sons and three daughters. Their eldest son was called Walter Thomas Mynors Baskerville. All of the children are mentioned in one way or another in the diaries of Francis Kilvert, who loved spending time with the family at Clyro Court.

Walter married Bertha Maria Hopton, the heiress to Canon Frome Court near Ledbury. At some stage during their marriage, Walter and Bertha seem to have disposed of the Wiltshire and Aberedw estates, but the reason for these disposals is not known because details were lost when a fire destroyed all of the family records. The couple had three children: Sybil, who never married, inherited the Canon Frome estate; Dorothy married a naval captain called Bernard Pratt-Barlow; and, Ralph, who also never married and who inherited the Clyro estate (some 8000 acres in total) when he was only 14, on the death of his father in 1897. Ralph was well loved in the village. His passion was hunting and he bred a pack of Romney Marsh hounds. When, in 1914, Ralph went off to fight in WW1, the hounds went to Whitney Court to join their pack. Sadly, Ralph died in the war. He had served as a Captain in the Glamorgan Yeomanry and was killed, on the Belgian border, in 1918; his name is on the war memorial in the churchyard.

After Ralph died, his sister, Dorothy (now widowed during the war) inherited Clyro Court and she lived in the house. She obviously found the house too much for her and so she moved to Cae Mawr just down the road. Clyro Court was let to a Greek shipping family called Mavriani. Dorothy had a daughter called Pamela, who took the Baskerville name when her uncle, Ralph, died. Pamela married a Mr Adams. When her aunt, Sybil, died she left Pamela the Canon Frome estate and so she changed her name to Hopton. Pamela had two sons, Simon and Geoffrey. Sadly, she died intestate and the Canon Frome estate was sold to Herefordshire County Council and later became a secondary school.

(As an aside, Julia told us about the link between the Baskervilles and Sir Arthur Conan Doyle. Whilst Ralph was at war and Dorothy was living at Clyro Court, Conan Doyle had written to her asking whether he could use the Baskerville name in a story he was writing, based on the legend of "The Black Dog of Hergest". Dorothy gave her permission, Conan Doyle moved his story to Dartmoor and the resultant book was "The Hound of the Baskervilles".)

Julia told us that her husband, Geoffrey Hopton, was the last of the Baskervilles because they had no son. Simon, Geoffrey's brother, had a son, Richard Hopton, who lives in Dorset. Simon did not

inherit the Canon Frome estate because it had been sold when Pamela had died. The Clyro estate had been sold on Dorothy's death and Clyro Court was bought by Radnorshire County Council and became a school. Geoffrey and Julia settled at Rookwood, in Bronydd near Clyro, in 1974.

Clyro School and Clyro Court School

JP showed some film footage taken in the 1960s by George Ingram of snow and flooding, as well as some film from Clyro Primary School when it was in the old building at the crossroads. He also showed photographs of Clyro Court when it was a secondary school, as well as others from the school reunions that were held in the building.

ML thanked JP for a most entertaining evening and told those in the hall that there were documents on display for them to peruse, including rent books and details of the sale of the Clyro estate in 1951 that had been brought in by Cherry Williams, as well as by Jenny Francis – many thanks to them as well.

As usual, refreshments were available for the Hall audience and many thanks to the people who provided and served these. Special thanks, as always, to John Price for making it possible for the audience on Zoom to share the evening's entertainment. We are, as ever, extremely grateful to him.