Notes from Local Interest Group 30th July 2026

Present: Prys Eckley, Peter Batten, Gareth Jones, John Price, Wendy Ozols, Stephen Thomas, Ann & Howard Dean, Caroline Black, Sue Gibb, Roy & Avryl Lloyd, Paul & Sue Buckingham, Bronwen Jenkins, Elsa Harflett, Grace Davies, Julie Price, Joan Clinksel, Sylvia Bigglestone, Edwina Griffiths, Jenny Smith, Joan Lloyd, Janet Russell, Jennifer Lewis, Linda Aiano, Jane Lloyd, Iris Lloyd, Michael & Sherree Love, Helen Barnett, Maureen Lloyd (ML)

Visit to Aberedw

ML welcomed everyone and introduced our hosts and speakers for the evening, Peter Batten, Prys Eckley and Gareth Jones.

We started our tour at the church, which is dedicated to St Cewydd. Prys told us that this has been a place of worship since the 6th century, obviously a pagan site at some point as evidenced by the four yew trees, which were significant to both druids and pagans. One of the yews had been estimated as being around 1500 years old in the early 1900s, and so it is ancient. Although there is no evidence to determine the exact date of the present church, it is referenced in a document of 1291. Over the centuries, much renovation work has been done and around 200 skeletons were discovered in a mass grave to the north east of the church towards the end of the 19th century. Archaeologists dated these to medieval times. There is much speculation about the reason for so many bodies having been buried here. Were they victims of a plague such as the Black Death? Given that they were mostly male and of military age, this would not be a representative sample of the population and so this theory seems unlikely. It is much more likely that the deaths were the result of a battle, and a brass shield boss possibly associated with an Anglo Norman soldier was found in the river in 1874 which may help to support this theory. The presence of the two castles in the village might also be the key to the actual explanation.

The church's porch is very large in comparison with the size of the church; it dates from the 15th century. Within the porch, on both sides, are benches. The reason for this is that the porch was used for a market, with traders on either side. There would also have been Aberedw Feast Day (14th June) and fayres with musicians, which also made use of the porch. On the wall inside the porch is a coffin lid, dated 1604, and a gravestone belonging to Samuel Cartwright who was a local writer and poet. Prys told us that a survey of all the gravestones in the churchyard had been conducted by the WI in the 1970s and that all of them have been recorded and the list kept up to date. On some, the inscriptions are very hard to read, and this is why a careful record has been made.

We then moved inside the church, which underwent a major refurbishment in 1883. One of the most notable features is the black rood screen which is believed to date from the late 14th century. The original stone font is now in Altmawr Church, and the current one is a much later replacement. Another feature that has been moved elsewhere is the Obit Bell, which is now in St Fagan's Museum, just outside Cardiff. This bell was one of only two that had survived in Britain after Oliver Cromwell had ordered the destruction of most of the others during the Interregnum (1649-1660). We were shown two wooden flutes that had been played by musicians out in the porch at fayres. The old funeral bier is in the tower, the door to which is accessible, and the replacement bell is still rung, but access is tricky. The nave of the church dates to the 14th century, the chancel to the 16th and the tower is Tudor (15th or 16th century). The roof inside is wonderful – it looks like an upside down boat – and there are wooden pegs holding beams etc together.

We then moved outside to the graveyard where Prys showed us the graves of Sir Walter Wyndham (who established the world's first airmail services) and the Moran family, one of whom was Winston Churchill's physician. Lady Rowntree, of Rowntree Sweets, is also buried in the churchyard. On the south wall of the church, Prys showed us where an old Priest's doorway had been blocked off – this was completely invisible inside the church. Lastly, at the top of the graveyard on the surrounding wall is a memorial to Flight Lieutenant Ian Hill who died on the hillside above the church on 24th June 1987. He had been taking part in a training flight when he lost control of his Jaguar aircraft. It is thought that, rather than ejecting from his aeroplane, he stayed in the aircraft in order to avoid its crashing into the village. In a field just above Llewelyn's Cave there is a cairn marking the place where the aircraft crashed and Fl Lt Hill died.

Peter Batten took us up to the first castle – Aberedw, rather unusually, has two. Building of castle one began in 1093; it was a motte and bailey castle built by the Baskervilles. Most of the castle was destroyed during the reign of King Stephen and then rebuilt in 1142. It was then held by the Normans after which the Welsh chieftains took over. Much to-ing and fro-ing then took place between the Tosnys, Walter Hacklutel and Roger Mortimer as control of the area changed hands a number of times. In 1260, it fell into the hands of Llywelyn ap Gruffudd and it became his hunting lodge. Llywelyn was ambushed in 1282 and hid in a cave above the village. He was probably killed outside Cilmeri (where there is a monument to him) although he might possibly have died in Aberedw. The motte of the castle is very well preserved; on one side the steep slope down to the Edw below provides perfect defence. The motte would have had a small tower on the top and there may have been a palisade around the bottom. The castle is on private land. In 1284, the castle was entirely demolished and Edmund Mortimer gave a licence to Walter Hacklutel to build a second castle just a short distance away.

Pic:- http--www.archwilio.org.uk-

The second castle, built by Hacklutel, had four towers and was crenelated. Very little of this castle remains – by 1397 it had fallen out of use. However, it is thought that stone from the castle was used as ballast when the railway line was built. Peter told us that when he was a child in the 1960s more of the actual structure was left, but there is little there now. The stones of one of the corner turrets are still just about discernible and parts of the outer wall are well preserved. A trackway giving access for the farmer and to the sewage works has been built through the site which is quite large, much bigger than the area of castle one. Apparently, the castle was not particularly well built and its construction bankrupted Hacklutel.

Pic:- http--www.archwilio.org.uk-

From castle two, we followed the line of the old railway and stopped at a spot overlooking where the sidings used to be. There were two sidings, one for stock and one for timber. The railway closed in 1962, the last train along the track being on 31st December of that year, and so its closure pre-dates the Beeching cuts. Aberedw had a signal box and a railway station to the north of the siding. We walked on to where the station used to be and the platform, probably about 100m long, is still clearly visible, together with the remains of the small station building which acted as the office and waiting room. The line ran from Three Cocks to the south to Moat Lane in the north (near Caersws). Originally it was called Aberedw Halt (built by public subscription of £100 and opened in 1867), but when the signal box was added it became Aberedw Station. There was always a full-time worker at the station. During WW1, coal from the South Wales coalfields was brought along this line on its way to the north of the country and eventually to Scarpa Flow in the Orkneys for the Grand Fleet stationed there. Troop trains also used the line. Initially it was the Mid

Wales Line, opened in 1864, then the Cambrian Line, then part of the Great Western Railway and lastly part of British Rail.

Our last stop of the evening was outside the old chapel. This was built in 1871 and closed in 2022. The building has been sold to a developer but so far planning permission to convert it into a house has been refused. The other buildings that Peter mentioned included the Post Office which had been run by Mrs Harvey up until she died in 1969. The old school in the village was built in 1871 and has a very similar architecture to that of the chapel. When it opened there were twelve children, seven of whom could not read or write. It was designed to accommodate 50 children, and the school roll very soon rose to nearly that number. The school closed in 1949. The school hall was converted into a house in the 1970s.

The pub, the Seven Stars, once also had a blacksmiths shop attached and the landlords were listed in the census as publican/blacksmith for a number of years. The building dates from the 1700s. There was an earlier blacksmiths shop opposite what is now Llewelyn House, possibly where Llewelyn ap Gruffdd had his pony reshod. Peter also told us that there were watermills all the way along the Edw, apparently numbering 39 at one time.

At the end of the evening, ML thanked Prys, Peter and Gareth for hosting us with special thanks to Prys and Peter for the wonderful commentary as we walked around the village. It had been a most enjoyable and educational visit, and the evening sunshine made the valley and surrounding hills look magical. We were so lucky to have such excellent guides, all of us learning a great deal about the village and its history.