

## Notes from Local Interest Group 24<sup>th</sup> November 2016

**Present:** Maureen Lloyd (ML), Wendy (WO) and Dainis Ozols (DO), Sue Farmer, Avryl (AL) and Roy Lloyd (RL), Richard Martin, Edwina Griffiths, Richard Thomas, John (JPH) and Margaret Price, Sue levers

**Apologies:** Pauline and Peter Spode, Adrian Chambers, Richard Harris

ML welcomed everyone and said that we would start by looking at a couple of articles published in the Congregational Quarterly, dating from the 1950s. These had been found by AL. Both articles were written by W G Latham. Latham had been the minister for the two Congregational churches of Rhosgoch and Painscastle in the 1940s. JPH has since found out that William (George) Latham has a headstone at Hermon chapel; his death is registered at Lothingland, Suffolk. The headstone reads: In Loving Memory, Rev. William Latham born 1st Dec 1896, Died 25th May 1970.

Two articles were read to the group. The one entitled "Preaching Adventure" (read by AL) talked about the difficulties faced by ministers in the 1940s and earlier as they fulfilled their ministry around their parishes. Because of the sparse nature of the population in this area, their "circuits" were often very large and this issue was compounded by the fact that there were limited transport facilities and a difficult terrain. Latham often cycled or walked in extremely inclement weather to reach his congregations. The article also included a wonderful description of the Edw valley and the tiny hamlet of Llanbadarn-y-Garreg and its tiny church of St Padarn. There was also a Congregational church in the hamlet, more a tiny hut on a hill track. Latham talked about how the locals could be snowed in for some days and, one year, for ten weeks. This probably referred to the very bad winter of 1946-47. Not only was this an extremely severe winter, but it had been preceded by a very bad summer and so fodder was in short supply.

Between the two Latham readings, JPH read an extract from the History of the Baptist In Radnorshire published in 1895.

*"The first Baptist meetings held in Painscastle of which I have an account were conducted by Mr Jenkins already mentioned. Mr Jenkins held meetings in his own house; this was before the year of 1839. Mr. Jenkins did not administer the ordinance of baptism at Painscastle. When my half-brother, Thomas Jones, was settled at Moriah, he began to preach in the village of Painscastle. He preached first at Whitehall, then at Trewilod, and at Pendre. Mr. Williams lived at Trewilod and Mr. Price at Pendre. My brother was a rather rigid Baptist. He was preaching one Sunday morning on the subject of baptism, when Mr. Lloyd, an Independent minister, contradicted him during the delivery of his sermon. A warm, but probably unedifying debate followed. There was not so much talk then as there is now about the Baptists and Congregationalists amalgamating. If they do ever amalgamate, they will have to meet at the river and shake hands".* (RL confirmed that the Baptist Chapel (Adullam) is dated 1848.)

The second article was entitled "Truly Rural". In this, Latham talked more about the people in his congregations and the district around Rhosgoch and Painscastle, as well as the other local churches, from Llandeilo Graban to Newchurch. He writes about the ninety year old miller in Rhosgoch and also in some depth about the "lads" of the district. On his arrival in Rhosgoch, he had been warned that the "lads" might see him as fair game and find ways of making trouble for him; he had been advised to simply ignore them and carry on regardless, which is what he did. However, he did have

some anecdotes about them to recount. Nonetheless, Latham went on to say that they had good hearts and would often walk large distances to turn out to carry the coffins

Both of these articles offered a wonderful insight into life in this district; Latham describes it as a "bowl", ten miles by three miles, almost completely surrounded by hills, and quite isolated, with just one bus per week on market day. We are extremely grateful to AL for finding these articles and for bringing them in to share with us all.

The next item was a poem, entitled "Church Million Pound Fund", which was read by ML. This poem can be found in Bryngwyn Church and was written in 1920 by William Wallis (Hay). JPH has done some further research about William Wallis and has found the following:

*William Godfrey Wallis was born in Hay, 18 October 1895, son of the Sub Postmaster. In World War One (1917) William was a Sapper in the Wireless Section. He was married at Goodwick, near Fishguard, in 1923. His trade was recorded as Wireless operator. He is also in the 1939 register as a Wireless Operator at Axbridge, Sedgemoor. He died in 1990, registered at Sedgemoor, Somerset. In his later years, aged 92, William sent reports of his childhood in Hay town and the surrounding area to the local Haywire magazine. However, he also had an Uncle William Wallis (Furniture Salesman), who is not registered on the published Census records for Hay to date; he died aged 81, registered in the Hay Area, 1930. There is no burial registered at Bryngwyn Church for William Wallis 1930.*

JPH then spoke about the Painscastle branch of True Ivorites and their Welsh influence in the Painscastle area, as mentioned at October's meeting. (JPH would like to thank Eva Morgan for her prompt to research this link further.) In **Transactions of the Honourable Society of Cymmrodorion 1999, (New Series, Vol. 6, 2000) 1999** he found the following:

### ***Francis Kilvert and Wales***

*"Benjamin Malkin writes in 1803 that the common language used was almost universally English, but he qualifies that by saying that the extreme western part of the county, Cwmteuddwr, was still monoglot Welsh-speaking, and that the south-eastern area of the county around Painscastle and Clyro and even beyond Offa's Dyke was bilingual. The reason for this may well be that the drovers of Cardiganshire and Carmarthenshire still drove their cattle from the Builth area over Clyro Hill to Rhydspence at this time, and so, when the railways took away the livelihood of the drovers in the nineteenth century, the Welsh language finally disappeared from the Clyro and Painscastle districts. The late Mr Ffrancis Payne, formerly of the Welsh Folk Museum, notes in his lucid two-volume survey of the county, Crwydro Sir Faesyfed, that the language was still spoken about 1850 by a few natives in the upper part of Clyro parish around Llanshiver (Llys Ifor), and that there was a branch of a Welsh friendly society, the True Ivorites (Y Gwir Iforiaid) at Painscastle as late as 1847. The process of anglicisation which began in the eighteenth century was, however, complete by Kilvert's time."*

This Welsh influence is explored further in this extract, which quotes a report from the Hereford Times dated May 22<sup>nd</sup> 1847:

### **Radnorshire Society transactions - Vol. 20 1950**

#### ***The True Ivorites in Radnorshire By W. H. Howse.***

*"The only other Lodge discovered in the newspaper files was the Lord Nelson Lodge at Painscastle, which kept its first anniversary at the Radnor Arms, Painscastle, on 28th April, 1847. In accordance*

*with the accepted procedure for Friendly Society Anniversaries, the Lodges on each occasion started the day with a service in church, to which they walked in procession, banners flying, to the martial strains of a brass band."*

*"The existence of a Lodge at Painscastle is interesting, as evidence of Welsh being spoken in the south-eastern part of the county in the 1840s. The description of the procession there in 1847 has a Druidic flavour. The secretary, we are told, led the procession in a white gown, carrying a book of rules. After him came two ministers (a Baptist from Hay and a Primitive Methodist from Presteigne) and the Kington Town Band. Then came the president and vice-president of the Lodge, in yellow gowns, carrying a sword and a dove with a branch in its mouth," followed by the rest of the members (joined by some from Talgarth and Crickadarn), decked with blue sashes, white gloves, and belts ornamented with ribbons. Sixty sat down to dinner, and, like True Ivorites they all returned sober to their respective places of abode." The speeches at the dinners were made in Welsh, and invariably included a panegyric in praise of the Welsh tongue. Members were reminded at the Abbey Cwmhir dinner of the following mottoes of the Society Tra mor tra Brython oes y byd i'r iaeth Cymraeg." These words may be translated in several ways (which Mr. Evan I Jones discusses in his letter). For a free rendering, Mr. Jones suggests "As lasting as the ocean may the Briton be may the Welsh language survive till the end of the world". The Ivor from whom the Society derived its name was Davydd ap Gwilym's patron, Ivor Hael (Generous)."*

Also reported in the Hereford Times, May 15<sup>th</sup> 1847, was another major meeting held three days later on May 1<sup>st</sup> 1847. This was "the first anniversary meeting of the Maslough (sic) Castle Lodge of Odd Fellows M.U. held at the Drovers Arms Painscastle. At 12 o'clock an excellent band from Llandegley led a procession from Painscastle to Llanbedr Church, where an appropriate discourse was delivered by the vicar Rev. W. Williams of Lowes."

Once again, many thanks to JPH for all of his hard work in unearthing this fascinating information relating to our local area.

At the end of the meeting, ML asked how members were getting on with the suggestions for next year's programme.

- RL said that we could go to the Ciliau in the summer. We all agreed that it would be best to ask the contact there when would be the best time for them.
- ML has been trying to get hold of Ken Jones, with no success as yet.
- RL, ML and WO will be meeting soon in order to put together some information on WARAG and Pendre Farm.
- RT is willing to talk about his house, perhaps in February or March.
- DO has e mailed Paul Remfry – no reply yet.

It was decided that we would **NOT** have a meeting in December.

January's meeting will take place on **Thursday 26<sup>th</sup> January, at the earlier time of 6.30 pm**, in the Adullam Hall. It will be an illustrated talk organised by Hannah Shaw of the Freshwater Habitats Trust, entitled "Fascinating Pondlife", and given by renowned cameraman, Sinclair Stammers.

Thank you to AL and EG for making the very welcome refreshments at the end of the meeting, always a great way to round of a most interesting evening.