

Spring

2013

Issue No 1

Free to members

£1 to non-members

CHRONICLE



Waterloo Street junction

Swansea at War

Historical Association, Swansea Branch
Promoting History in South West Wales

From the Editor

Welcome to our first edition of Chronicle.



The Journal not only to be read by you, but, written by you. We will concentrate on different periods of history and for every edition we will be asking you, the members of the Historical Association, not just the academics, to send in contributions. Next edition... 'Medieval times'.

Margaret McCloy

From the Chairman

The Swansea Branch, founded in 1926, has had its ups and downs, a down happening in the 90s when the Branch virtually ceased to exist. However, it was revived in 2009, inspired by the interest in local and family history evident in the activity of local history societies, and in the annual book fair held in Swansea Museum. The Branch has also benefitted from the support and encouragement by the National Waterfront Museum. Access to the Museum's facilities has been a key element in the Branch's success. While we have a full programme for the immediate future, we are very much open to suggestions for future events, visits, lectures and collaborations. The launching of Chronicle is an attempt to record our achievements, set out our ambitions and open the door to new ideas.

Dr John Law

Message from the President

Swansea Branch of the HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION is one of the liveliest in the country. This vitality owes much to a true 'association' with the National Waterfront Museum and its congenial meeting facilities—and, soon, a new lecture theatre. The friendly gossip before lectures and discussion afterwards seem uninhibited; they encourage togetherness, which this newsletter will also surely do.

Success comes from the audience: a broad range of people simply interested in history, and the range of expert talks, from classical times to the contemporary world, with no agenda other than to entertain, inform and educate. Shakespeare wrote 'There is a history in all men's lives'.

Moreover, the revival of Swansea's branch has been an entirely voluntary enterprise of enthusiastic historians, individuals, some professional, some not, but all committed – through a hard-working committee ? to bringing their own enthusiasm and sense of history to the enjoyment of a wider audience.

Swansea's branch of the Historical Association is already making a mark on the cultural landscape and deserves our wholehearted support.

Professor Ralph Griffiths

Last Year's Events

The monthly talks began in January with four lectures on 'The History of Time'. On 7 January, following the Branch's annual general meeting, the Executive Secretary gave a talk appropriately entitled 'Happy New Year. The Changing Date of New Year's Day'. Later in the month John Ashley gave a talk on 'The Great Meridian Conference' whilst Dr Adam Mosley's talk was entitled 'Day-time, Night-time, Maritime'. January's talks were completed with a presentation by Dr Nicholas Riall, who gave a fascinating lecture on the dating of 'The Red Lady of Paviland', which attracted an audience of about 120 people.

There were talks for St Valentine's Day, and an audience with two renowned authors speaking on 'Authenticity in Historical Fiction'. Professor Bernard Knight and Susanna Gregory kept a large audience enthralled, and were equally impressed by the quality and variety of questions from the floor.

Later, there was a Presidential Lecture by Professor Jackie Eales, who spoke of "The Monstrous Regiment of Women" in Tudor and Stuart Britain'. Other talks were on Wales's patron saint, Saint David, by Dr Lucinda Matthews-Jones on 'Upstairs, Downstairs at Toynbee Hall, East London, 1880–1914' and by Dr Rhianydd Biebrach who spoke to the Branch on 21 April on 'The Estates of Neath Abbey'. This talk reflected her research of this subject as part of Swansea University's investigation of the history of Neath Abbey, a project that is supported by the Branch.

But, there was still time in May for an excursion to ... Hereford and Berrington Hall!

On a hot July day, the Branch was present at Cadw's Festival of Heritage, Arts and Crafts at Laugharne Castle, where the branch arranged a fascinating demonstration by David Coley on 'The Arms and Armour of the Medieval Knight'. At our own castle, in September, the Branch provided tour guides for an open weekend event. It was so successful that Swansea City and County Council has invited the Branch to provide the same service in 2013 and to write a booklet on the history of the castle.

Amongst the many interesting talks last year, was one about Cuban Slaves and Swansea Copper given by Professor Chris Evans of the University of Glamorgan. For a change, the Branch presented a double-bill celebrating the bi-centenary of Charles Dickens's birth. The morning's speaker was actor and poet Peter Read, who spoke on 'The Frenzied and Creative Life of Charles Dickens', and in the afternoon, Dr Andrew Mangham spoke on 'Suicide, Forensic Medicine and The Pickwick Papers'.

It was not just talks; the branch had stalls at various fairs including those of Glamorgan Family History Society's Fair, and The Royal Institution of South Wales Local History Book Fair. The Branch's annual '*Local History . . . Live!*' event at the Waterfront Museum brought many local groups together under the HA umbrella to meet the public and each other. Thanks must be given to all those members who helped make these such a success.

In the summer, the Branch provided Committee members to help the local branch of the Classical Association present its very successful 'Latin in the Park' project, held on Saturday afternoons in Singleton Park. October saw the Branch involved in various universities' Fresher's Fairs. Our officers manned the Branch's tables at Trinity St Davids Lampeter and Carmarthen, and Swansea University.

In December 2012, the Branch presented another double bill, this time in celebration of Christmas. The morning talk was given by Dr John Law, who spoke on 'Christmas in the Italian Renaissance'; and in the afternoon, Llew Smith (former MP for Blaenau Gwent) spoke on 'The History of Protest through the Medium of Christmas Cards'.

All in all, 2012 proved to be a very successful year for the Branch.

Colin James, Executive Secretary

Swansea at War- a Chronology

- 1939** Black out imposed, no chinks of light, no see through curtains, no car head lights.
War declared. SW Evening Post announces; all cinemas, theatres and football pitches to be closed. All schools to remain closed at least for the next week. Places of worship to be open. Petrol rationing begins. Guy Fawkes Night cancelled. No Christmas lights.
- 1940** Ration cards for dogs 'Careless talk costs lives'.
- May Queues of men wanting to be enrolled on Swansea list of volunteers. All sign posts and street names in Swansea removed.
- June First air raid attack on Swansea. High explosive bombs dropped. All failed to explode.
- July Plane drops four high explosive bombs on Kings Dock at 10.20 a.m. 12 dockyard workers killed, 26 injured.
- July Three battalions of Home Guard formed in Swansea.
- August Copies of Hitler's speech dropped over Fairwood Common. Midnight raid, 20 dead, 15 injured.
Battle of Britain begins. Twenty high explosive bombs fall in sea near Mumbles Head.
- September **First blitz on Swansea.** Raid lasts seven hours. Over 250 HX bombs and 1000 incendiary bombs. Fire at Llandarcy Oil Refinery; 6 tanks crude oil lost. William Jenkins bravery rewarded with the first George Medal of the war. Stepney Street, Cwmbwla, bombed, 33 deaths, 115 injured.
- 1941** Jan Raid on Swansea 8pm-12.05am. Freezing conditions. 55 dead, 97 casualties.
- February '**The Three Nights Blitz**', over 13 hours of intensive bombing. Town Centre destroyed. 1 rest centres set up and 22 water tanks brought in. Mayor gives £50,000 to help families. 6,500 people without homes, 15 schools destroyed, food shops have gas and water cut off. St Mary's Church destroyed.
- March King George VI and Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth visit Swansea.
- April Winston Churchill and his wife visit the ruined streets of Swansea.
- June Clothes rationing begins.
- August Home Secretary, Herbert Morrison, visits Swansea.
- 1942** Bombing continues.
- 1943** Huge Army camps built in Singleton Park to billet infantry. Swansea under attack again, 850 houses and hospital damaged. 34 killed, 110 casualties,
- 1944** 11,000 troops arrive in Swansea, 800 ships in bay. D Day 6th June. Home Guard parades in Swansea before 'standing down'. Christmas Day treats; half a pound of sweets.
- 1945** **Germany surrenders.** Great day of celebration in Swansea, bonfires and street parties.

Taken from **The WW2 Diary**, submitted by Mr Royston Kneath.

“Spam Fritter or Snoek Rissole tonight, dear?”

Wartime Recipe, Sandwich Filling

2 tbsp. mashed potato, 1tbsp. cocoa, 1 tbsp. sugar, vanilla flavouring

*Would you like to try this?
Comments welcome!*

Childhood memories of a Southfields boy

I was and still am a ‘Southfields boy’, born in Bond Street where I grew up in in the 30’s and 40’s. Wartime years , but for me full of excitement. Our favourite hunting ground was the South Dock, to swim amongst the steamers in the warm but filthy water, full of jelly fish and illicit rubbish. The water kept warm by the ship’s generators. Our sworn enemies were the Dock’s police, always on the lookout for villainous looking but innocent band of 12 year old lads.

We made our own canoe from a shop blind removed from a bombed building in the town. We used a hammer, saw and roofing nails, the design changed every day; eventually we ended up with a punt like craft that was big enough for six or eight brave sea going lads. It was launched after being carried through Rodney Street at the arch entrance and down to the beach. Excited, we used our home made paddles, when slowly it took in water and sank. By then Police and parents had arrived, heralded by the clanging of a police car bell. After being cuffed around the ear, I returned home to a second punishment, but my reputation was not impaired.

Sid Kidwell, Citizen Historian



As early as **October 1939** the Minister of Food asked everyone to ‘Dig for Victory’. Dr Carrot and Potato Pete encouraged people to turn their gardens into vegetable patches and by 1943 a million tons of fruit and vegetables had been grown in gardens and allotments.

Even so, food rationing had to start, people were asked to register at local shops and hand over their food coupons. The first foods rationed were bacon, sugar, tea, butter and meat. Long queues were inevitable. In 1941 only one egg a week was allowed. How would it be used? In a cake, boiled or fried? At least, with dried egg powder, you could still have eggy bread.

My father, Captain Brindley Luen, was Assistant Dock Master in Swansea during WW2.

He was on duty on that fateful night of 19th February, the beginning of the **Three Night Blitz**.

The Dock Master, Captain Slater, having finished for the day, left my father in charge of the docks and the Fire Services. Nearly fourteen hours of intensive bombing followed ...father didn’t come home for three days.

Exhausted, he finally arrived home, driven in a truck and covered in an old blanket. His smart captain’s uniform, the four gold bands on his sleeves, all singed by fire and destroyed. But he was one of the lucky ones, he only lost his uniform, so many that night, lost their lives.

Father was awarded the MBE and went to Buckingham Palace where he met King George VI. The King approached my father and bowed, my father bowed and went to move on. The King got hold of father’s lapels, pulled him back and stuttered that he ‘Hadn’t finished with him yet.’ He wanted to know all about those terrible nights in Swansea.

Marcia Rogers

R S Thomas - The Grumpy Poet?

There are times when people think it's impossible to be a major poet in Wales, unless your surname is Thomas. Since his death in 1953 Dylan has been celebrated as one of the great performers of his poems and renowned for his wonderful short stories and his play, *Under Milk Wood*. Although Edward Thomas was born in England he finds his way into Encyclopaedias of Welsh literary greats on account of his father coming from Tredegar and his mother from the Newport area. If modern day Welsh football managers can do it then why shouldn't poetry anthologists? So that gives us Dylan, Edward and, of course, R S Thomas, whose centenary is being celebrated in 2013, as three of the great Anglo-Welsh poets of the twentieth century.

Ronald Stuart Thomas was born in Cardiff in 1913. With a father in the Royal Navy, the young R S moved around, until the family settled in Holyhead in 1918. He read Classics at the University of North Wales Bangor and trained for the Anglican priesthood at St Michael's College, Cardiff.

In the 1970s, television made a documentary about his life. As a teenager recently enamoured by the power and beauty of poetry, I watched the programme. I was amazed when R S confided he did not think he was a good priest. When asked why he thought that, he told the interviewer he didn't like people.

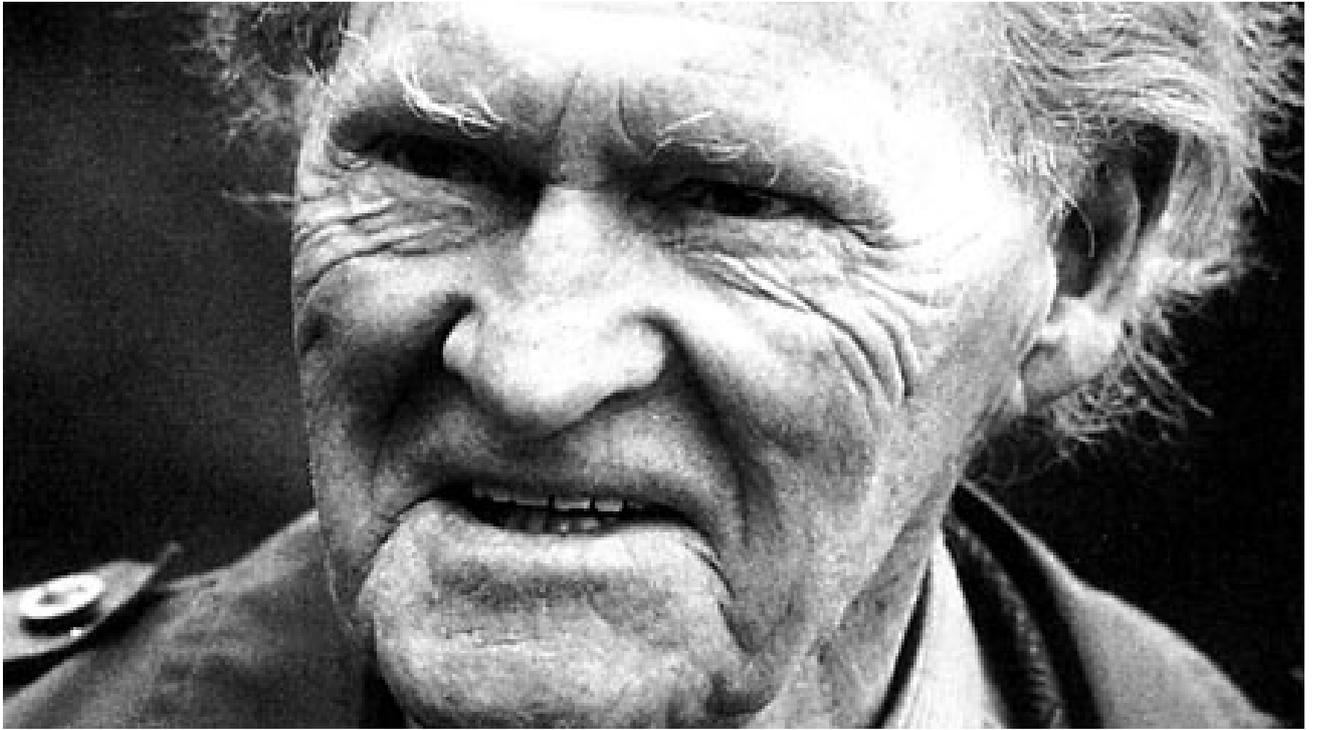
Certainly, he was known by many as the 'grumpy bard'. In a recent radio programme about his life, Peter Finch hailed R S Thomas as 'one of the great miserabilists of Wales'. R S recognised this trait in himself and found it difficult after officiating at weddings to wish the couple a happy life together. 'Happiness is not one of my priorities', he once stated. People attending his public readings were often amazed by the coldness of his presentation and his unwillingness to use the introductions to his poems to give the listener an insight into his private life.

Despite the accolade for misery, Peter Finch in the same programme, along with Gwyneth Lewis, the former poet laureate of Wales, both confirmed that under the stern exterior there lived a great sense of humour. Renowned for being a fast and rather frightening driver, he was once transporting some fellow poets, when he shot through traffic lights which were set on red. 'Did you see that red light, R S?' one of them asked. 'When you've seen one red light, you've seen them all', he responded. (Radio Wales, 27 March 2013)

R S knew he was at odds with society's perception of literature. 'To make a poetic artefact out of words has never, or rarely, been my first aim or satisfaction. There is always lurking in the back of my poetry a moralistic or propagandist intention.' (Both quotes from W D Thomas Memorial Lecture at University Wales Swansea, November 1963)

For Thomas, the hill farmer, following his ancient craft of survival always poses a 'gaunt question.' Throughout his 'peasant' poems there is always the question of who or what the farmer represents. One is always left wondering whether the poet and farmer understand each other. Thomas hinted at this when he once said, 'I was a spokesman for the hill farmers. I like to think they read what I wrote, but I don't think they did.' Perhaps the problem lay in the fact that Thomas' description of hill farmers was more symbolic and emblematic than accurate. Iago Prytherch, scraping a living on the bald Welsh hillside, was 'sour with sweat.' He also sat at night, motionless, except when he 'Leaned to gob in the fire.' Yet, he is not to be despised, but as our prototype should be remembered and celebrated 'For he too is a winner of wars / Enduring like a tree under the curious stars.' (The Peasant)

As well as the battle of man against nature, there were personal struggles which also defined R S Thomas. Always marked out by his polished and English enunciation of the language, he was conscious of his Welsh birth and upbringing. At the age of thirty he learned Welsh and in his later life



many of his poems engaged with the question of Wales with many espousing a nationalist position. Despite this immersion in things Welsh, he once claimed that his Anglicised upbringing 'prevents one from feeling a hundred per cent at home in Welsh Wales.' As an Anglican priest, he also felt isolated from the chapel-dominated landscape and history of Wales.

This sense of battle is also encapsulated in the way he deals with the subject of God in his poetry. In the poem 'In Church' he imagines himself in the darkness of the old sanctuary, once the worshippers have gone home. 'Often I try / To analyse the quality / Of its silence. Is this where God hides / From my searching?' This feeling of the divine absence permeates many of Thomas' poems. In 'The Absence' he writes, 'It is a room I enter / From which someone has just / Gone, the vestibule for the arrival / Of one who has not yet come.'

In his private life he countered his internal battles with a rigid sense of order. Meals were always at the same time; Breakfast at 8.00am, lunch 1.00, tea at 5.00 and supper at 8.00pm. His wife 'Elsie' Eldridge had been a hugely respected and talented artist, but after their marriage she abandoned her art and concentrated on caring for R S.

His ministry in Manafon was followed by Eglwys Fach in Cardiganshire (1954–67), then Aberdaron from 1967 to his retirement in 1978. He died in 2000 but he has left a legacy which will survive far beyond this centenary year and I, for one, believe he would have been considered a major poet if his name had been Lewis, Evans or even Fotheringay!

In his poems we meet a prize fighter forcing his reader to look at our fight with nature, the conflict between what we are and what we could be and the morale sapping search for a God too often absent. In a world of minimalistic verse and stark functional language, we should be grateful the R S Thomas was prepared to fight the battle on our behalf in a writing style which will forever remain powerful and startling.

Perhaps the reason for this effectiveness can be summed up in the words of Soren Kierkegaard, a philosopher Thomas admired greatly. Kierkegaard claimed, 'He who strove with the world became great by conquering the world and he who strove with himself became greater by conquering himself, but he who strove with God became greater than all.'

Peter Read

Wartime Travel

A memory; that of P. Watkins:

'... It was the last night of the blitz...we ran to the Central Hall where we normally caught our bus to Clydach ,it must have been the last "Valley Bus" out of Swansea . We went to work the following morning but the bus was stopped at the top of High Street and a policeman asked us where we were going. "To work in John Roberts", we replied.

His reply stunned us-"There is no John Roberts anymore, it is just a mass of rubble"...'

Another memory: 'We hurried to the bus station and... suddenly; a basket of incendiary bombs fell right in front of us. They burst into flames and rolled under one of the buses. The bus driver ran forward and moved the bus while others threw sand bags on the bombs, which by now were burning fiercely. Women and children were screaming and bundled into a room under the stairs...'

An ARP warden noted: ...A fire bomb fell on a stationary bus in Castle Street, which was burnt out, the bus was empty...

The above incidents and others examined, demonstrate the commonplace nature of the bus in extraordinary circumstances: blocked from completing journeys, operating during and after raids, passing stops when full, providing both for those fleeing and seeking respite, and, occasionally, being bombed.

Robert McCloy

Travels in the Valleys Launch

The Branch's first book, *Travels in the Valleys* by Robert McCloy, was launched at the Uplands Bookshop on 21st February. Robert gave a lively discourse to a rapt audience, followed by wine and much signing of books.



Connected Communities HFL Grant

The Swansea Branch of the Historical Association has won a £9,950 HFL grant. The project is researching oral histories of the White Rock and Hafod areas, and creating digital trails and supporting resources. Members and non-members are invited to participate in the research and other areas in which they may be interested. Training and equipment for interpreting and collecting oral histories are available for this and other projects.

The project focuses on the lives of the people who worked at the site and lived around it. Industry, including of course copper, is in the background but it is not the primary target of the project. We are interested in everyone in the community, in families from infancy and childhood to old age. The community at work, at prayer, at play, and at mischief.

The rich and largely unresearched archives of oral histories of the area is being explored. They will be made available on the site as a digitally-supported walk on smartphones, via QR codes at key points, and as traditional paper guides and information points. The full results of the research will be made available through the Historical Association, West Glamorgan Archives, Swansea University Miners' Library archives, and other repositories identified during the course of the project.

The volunteers have widened the scope of the project, especially to include more community involvement. The HFL grant is limited to the digital trail and associated activities, with the rest covered by good old-fashioned labour and fund raising. A further tranche of HFL funding is on the horizon.

The project volunteers to date are John Ashley, Neil Thomas, Val Freidenfelds, Tudor and Janet Price, Liz McSloy and Rosemary Crahart. The student researchers are Bleddyn Penny, Andrew Thomas, Becca Hopkins and Gabor Uri. The project's academic advisor is Dr Steve Thompson from Aberystwyth University, and we also have the support of White Rock specialist Professor Chris Evans of the University of Glamorgan.

There is plenty of room for more volunteers! Talk to me or the other volunteers to find out more:

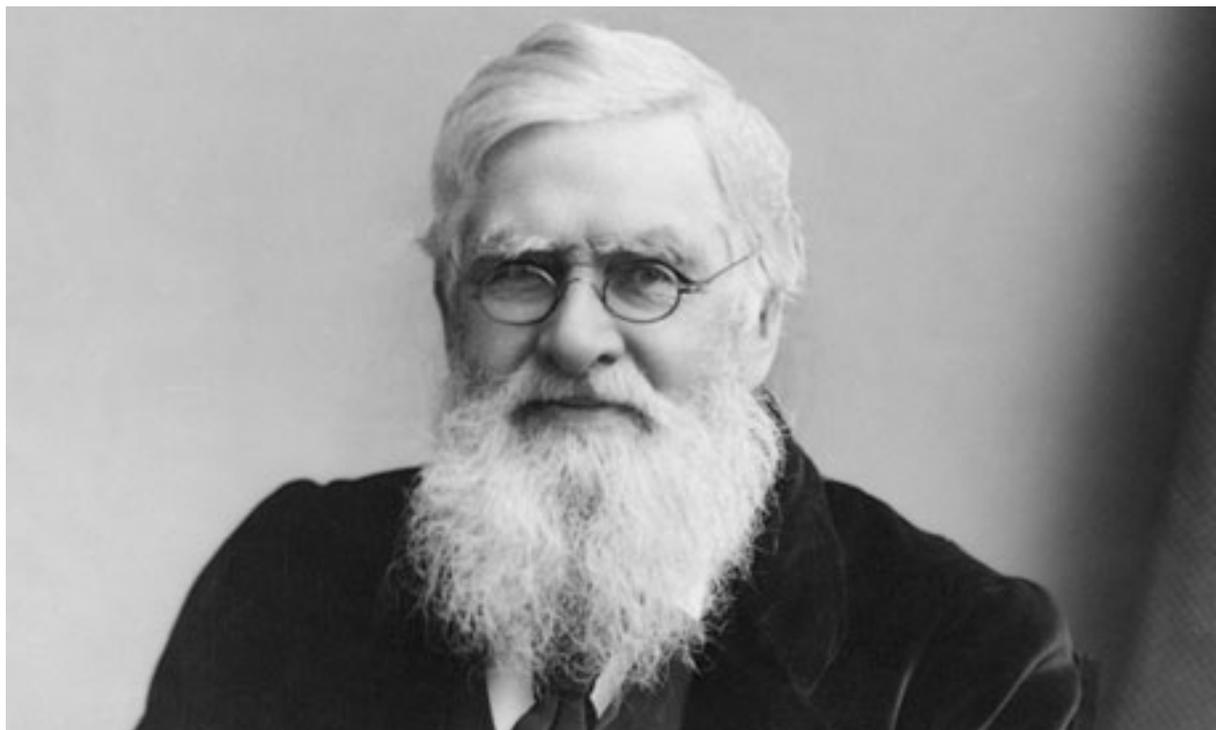
John Ashley, john@globespinner.net, 0770 9900 788, whiterockhfl.wordpress.com

John Ashley

Blank

1940s Museum Ad

Alfred Russel Wallace, 1823 - 1913



An introduction to AR Wallace by **Dr Lindsay Morgan**.

“Some years ago my wife and I were walking in the hills behind Clydach when we got into conversation with a man who surprised us by saying that it was not Charles Darwin who had “invented” (sic) the theory of evolution but a local man from Neath called Wallace.

“This was news to me and so I started my research. It was not all correct, but what was true was that Wallace had lived in Neath for a number of years and later been associated with Charles Darwin in establishing the theory of “The origin of the species by natural selection”, by survival of the fittest, those most able to adapt to their environment.

“I discovered that by the time of his death in 1913 he was one of the most important naturalists in the UK. and credited as the co-author of the Darwin -Wallace Theory. Yet, by 2000 his name was hardly known.

“Now in 2013 naturalists in association with the Natural History Museum are bringing him to the fore again featuring him in Radio and TV programmes, lectures and local tours around Neath and Hertford (his schoolplace).

“Wallace wrote to Darwin in 1858 whilst abroad detailing his theory of evolution. Papers and letters by both of them were read at the Linnean Society introducing the idea of natural selection. A recent book has suggested that Wallace should be given primacy over Darwin as the latter may have been less than honest about the timing of receipt of Wallace’s letter, but perhaps not too much should be made of this as they remained good friends.”

On Saturday 15th June the Swansea Branch of the Historical Association is joining with Neath Antiquarian Association and others to celebrate the centenary of Alfred Russel Wallace, co-founder with Charles Darwin of the Theory of Evolution Natural Selection.

2pm, venue xxxx?, George Beccaloni bio xxxxx?, title xxxxx?.

7 pm, dinner at The Old Town Hall, Church Place, Neath. £20 per person.

Book with Ray Savage , 23 Birchwood Close, Bryncoch, Neath SA10 7UP

News

“Having spent much of my professional life trying and failing to fathom out Wales’s greatest statesman, the ‘Welsh Wizard’, David Lloyd George, I am delighted to offer my congratulations and good wishes to the Swansea Branch of the HA on the inauguration of its new journal ‘Chronicle’. Long may ‘Chronicle’ continue to stimulate thinking about the History of Wales and beyond’. Professor Antony Lentin, Wolfson College, Cambridge.”

**Professor Antony Lentin
Wolfson College, Cambridge**

“‘History on your doorstep’ has always been a theme in my life: pursuing its ramifications gives a sense of identity and of proving. I am delighted to welcome this new initiative and wish it well. FLOREAT!”

**Dr. R. Brinley Jones, President of the
University of Wales, Trinity Saint David**

“As a final year undergraduate studying history at Swansea University, the Historical Association (South Wales) has played an important role in my growth as a student; providing the opportunity to expand my knowledge. With the addition of a regular publication ‘Chronicle’, I am confident that with the help of members such as Margaret McCloy, the Association will continue moving from strength to strength and wish her well in this new endeavor. I would also like to add a personal well done to Margaret on her recent accomplishment, achieving a Bachelor of Science degree this summer.”

David Coley.

In 1911 there was a Royal Commission on Coastal Erosion and Afforestation. Although many of its findings were important, they were effectively ‘lost to the memory’, and current research is now repeating the same work and drawing similar conclusions.

It is vital to learn from ‘History’ and therefore, it is important to have accessible narratives documenting events. As journals are key in this respect, I would like to wish ‘Good Luck’ to Margaret McCloy and the Chronicle for the first edition which she is editing, and for a long term secure future for the journal.

**Michael Phillips, Professor of Coastal Science
Swansea Metropolitan, University of Wales, Trinity St David.**

Historical Association, Swansea Branch - Programme

18 May 2013

Dr Kirsti Bohata (Swansea University), **Amy Dillwyn**.

15 June 2013

Professor Mark Humphries (Swansea University), **Constantine, Christianity, and the Lost Gospel: 1,700 Years of Religious Revolution**. This event is arranged in collaboration with the South-West Wales branch of The Classical Association

15 June 2013

Throughout the day at various locations in Neath. **Alfred Russel Wallace**: A commemoration of the centenary of his death

28 June 2013 (Friday)

Visit to St David's Cathedral for a guided tour with the Bishop of St David's.

20 July 2013

Dr Hugh Dunthorne, **Images of War in Early-Modern Europe**.

17 August 2013

Richard Turner (Cadw), **The Medieval Cult of the Assumption of the Virgin Mary**.

21 September 2013

The Presidential Lecture by Professor Jackie Eales (President of the HA). **The Campden Wonder of 1662: The Murder and Miraculous 'Deliverance of William Harrison'**.

12 October 2013

Local History ... Live!, The Historical Association's Local History Fair

19 October 2013

The Anniversary Lecture by Professor John France, **Warfare in the Age of the Crusades: A Clash of Contrasts**.

16 November 2013

John Hugh Thomas, **A Swansea Squire: Music Making in 19th-century Swansea**.

21 December 2013

Dr Steph Mastoris (National Waterfront Museum), **History of the Christmas Card**.



Dr John Law,
Branch Chair
(photo David Coley)

All events are at the National Waterfront Museum, 11:00 Saturday, unless otherwise stated.

How to Join

Join at a meeting, or email haswansea@ymail.com

Branch membership fees for 2013:

Individual membership: £10.

Concessionary membership: £5.

Family (household) membership: £15.

Student (to 30 September 2013): £3

National Membership

Members of the national Historical Association living in the area have automatic branch membership.

www.history.org.uk

Officers and Committee

John Law (Chairman), John Ashley (Vice Chairman), Colin James (Executive Secretary), Ray Savage (Treasurer), Claire Vivian (Membership Secretary), Dave Burrow, Rosemary Crahart, Caroline Franklin, Rosie Gitsham, Royston Kneath, Robert McCloy, Elizabeth McSloy, Eddie Owens, Ian Smith, Karmen Thomas. Representative members: Sid Kidwell (Citizen Historian), Brenig Davies (Friends of Carmarthen County Museum), Robert Leonard (St Mary's Church, Swansea), Irene Thomas (Neath Antiquarian Society).