

# CHRONICLE

Issue 6 Autumn 2014



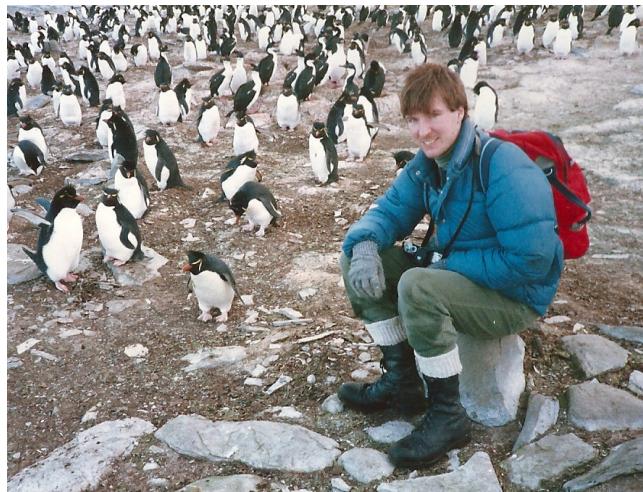
**Historical Association, Swansea Branch**

Promoting History in South West Wales

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*The committee has decided not to charge members for their copy of Chronicle.*

*It will remain free to members and £1 to non-members. In this issue we have an extra four pages.*

“A journey of a thousand miles must begin with a single step.” – Lao Tzu

“Travel is fatal to prejudice, bigotry, and narrow-mindedness.” – Mark Twain

“Two roads diverged in a wood and I – I took the one less travelled by.” – Robert Frost

For list of Officers and Committee members see our Website [www.haswansea.org.uk](http://www.haswansea.org.uk)

# From the Editor

*Yes, I enjoyed the travelling, even with fixed plans but on arriving... sometimes it was disappointing.  
Like the things I didn't see...*

Like Niagara Falls... yes, I went all the way through Canada, driven very slowly by an elderly uncle, only to arrive and find that the falls weren't there. They had been diverted to the American side for repair work. Not even a trickle.

Then there were the street cars. Driving to San Francisco, with my transport enthusiast husband, we turned on the car radio to hear an announcement...cable cars to be taken out of service at midnight', the first time in over a hundred years, for repair work. Same went for Michelangelo's David in Florence. Not a sight of him. Being repaired and cleaned.

Disneyland in Los Angeles was off. Closed for the day except to the post office workers of America. Then there were the Blackpool illuminations. Driven to see them by friends in Newcastle, 'you must see them, they're wonderful', we arrived the night after they were turned off. And it was raining .At least Wales was there when I made my first journey from London. Long before the motorway was built.

No car, just an old Lambretta scooter. No fancy leather cycling gear, just two winter coats on top of each other covered by a plastic mac. No crash helmet, just a woollen bobble hat held down by a scarf. Then there were the goggles with plastic lenses ringed with black fake fur. No sun, just pouring rain. When we finally arrived eight hours later, rain



*"A good traveller has no fixed plans and is not intent on arriving." – Lao Tzu*

from the fake fur had left my face covered in black stain. I looked as if I had spent the day working in a coal mine.

But at least I saw Cardiff and even Tiger bay by night. A cousin, with tattoos and a shaven head was a black belt martial arts champion and we strode fearlessly around keeping carefully behind him. My first glimpse of Wales. My first journey over the border.

Inside this issue you can read of many travellers and of their exciting and interesting expeditions. Travels as far apart as China and the Falkland islands. Sit in your armchair and enjoy.

Margaret McCloy

*"The world is a book and those who do not travel read only one page." – St. Augustine*

## Christmas Dinner

The Branch Christmas Dinner will be held on Wednesday 26 November, 7pm for 7.30 pm, at Sketty Hall. Three courses, £17 for members and £20 for non-members, after-dinner speaker tba.

To book please contact Colin James (Branch Executive Secretary) at [haswansea@ymail.com](mailto:haswansea@ymail.com), or phone 07971 665594. Cheques payable to The Historical Association, Swansea Branch.

# The Wales Coast Path: making history, revealing history

One of my current projects is walking, with an old friend, the whole 870 miles of the Wales Coast Path (with Offa's Dyke Path as an optional extra). We started last summer and still have two thirds to go. Each day is recorded in a published blog.

The Coast Path is historic – Wales is the first country in the world to have a designated path around all its coastline – and historical, in the sense that so much history can be seen along its course. History that's often little-known and unexpected, even to those who think they may know Wales well.

Some of the archaeological and historical sites are well enough known, of course, especially on

***But Coast Path hikers aren't tourists. We're completists, obliging ourselves to trudge every mile, every yard of the way, no matter into what deserted or apparently unattractive parts the Path might lead us.***

the picturesque stretches that appeal to tourists. In north Pembrokeshire, for example, the path east of Aber Mawr takes in the promontory fort of Castell Coch, the Neolithic burial chamber called Carreg Samson, and the ghostly remains of the once thriving brick industry in Porthgain.

Experience has taught us that there's almost an inverse relationship between the picturesque and popular and the historically interesting. The least promising parts of the coast turn out to offer the most vivid glimpses into Wales today and Wales in the past. Few people are aware of the role Wales played in the development of

radio technology. But it was at Lavernock, near Penarth, that Guglielmo Marconi in 1897 first



succeeded in transmitting a radio signal over sea water, from the island of Flat Holm.

## ***Carreg Sampson***

The Path passes by the very spot, though the event is now commemorated only by an old plaque on a church wall and in the name of a caravan park.

You could, incidentally, trace the history of Welsh caravan parks by walking the Path – they vary widely in age and character – as well as other signs of seaside holidays of the past (in Porthcawl and Barry Island). A few miles further along the Path from Lavernock you pass the spot in south Penarth where the French impressionist Alfred Sisley, painted, en plein air, ships sailing along the Bristol Channel, (later Sisley moved to Swansea, staying and painting in Rotherlade).

Electrical history provides another example. The Path passes several power stations which over the years have made major contributions to the National Grid (established on a national basis in 1938). In the spring we walked past one of them, Uskmouth B, just a couple of days before its closure was announced. The skies over the land east of Newport are threaded with skeins of power lines linking power stations on both sides of the Severn Estuary to feed the Grid.



## Rotherlade Bay

In fact it's a 'caisson' and was built about forty years ago as a cold water inlet to serve the Aberthaw B power station.

A final example is the sparsely populated flatlands, so uncharacteristic of Wales that border the coast between Cardiff and Newport and east of Newport. The Path tends to run along the seawall berm that shields this land, the Peterstone and Gwent Levels, from the waves. As you walk along – there are virtually no

***Further west, at Aberthaw, a circular structure sits in the sea just off the coast. It's so archaic and graceful, despite its concrete construction, that it could be mistaken for a Napoleonic period 'Martello Tower'***

other walkers here – you can't fail to notice that the fields on the landward side are considerably lower than the level of high tide.

This reclamation began, archaeologists tell us, in Mesolithic times, and continued through the Roman and medieval periods. The origin of the wall may be thousands of years old.

At Goldcliff near Newport you pass by the site of a medieval priory, and the place where a Roman inscription was found in 1878 marking building work (seawall defences?) by soldiers of the

Second Augusta Legion based at Caerleon.

Historical associations like these, though, may not be obvious to the casual, as opposed to the systematic, coastal walker. Sometimes you come across helpful signs, like the one in Penarth that tells you about Sisley and the recent collapse into the sea through erosion of a tree that he painted.

But more often not, as at Goldcliff, there's nothing on the spot to alert you to what you might be missing.

Of course no one would want the countryside littered with helpful signs every few yards. But these days there is another way, thanks to the internet and the mobile smartphone.

Already the Conwy-based organisation History Points has set up QR (Quick Response) codes at 300 places along the length of the Wales Coast Path. They enable a smartphone user to summon up concise web information about the place concerned.

But QR codes need a physical location. People need to know where they are. It's unlikely there'll ever be a large number of them. So for some time I've been mulling over the idea of planning a web-based 'walking encyclopedia' that didn't rely on finding any physical object in the landscape, and that could offer much more detail.

It would be an encyclopedia of the Gower coast (that stretch of the Coast Path only because it happens to be nearest to home): a mixture of footpath guide, gazetteer, guidebook, image gallery and collection of essays. It could be built up bit by bit, by many contributors, according to their interests and specialisms.

As well as information on history and archaeology, it could tell you about geography and geology, flora and fauna, sea life, the built environment, and the language and literature in the area you're walking through. All kinds of digression – physical (paths leading off the Coast Path) and intellectual – would be possible, since there are virtually no spatial limits to a digital resource. Interaction could be built in, so that people could hold digital conversations about what they've seen and discovered, and make

their own contributions of new information.

The digital footpath and the places along it would all be geo-referenced, so that you wouldn't need to know where you were on a map to find information on where you were standing or what you were looking at – as long as you were holding a working smartphone,

***What you're looking at is 26,000 acres of artificial land, reclaimed from the sea and drained by man-made reens and other ditches.***

and as long as the phone was within signal. Of course at present neither is guaranteed, especially in the remoter corners of Gower, but in the future signal coverage will improve.



This is the kernel of the idea, but much more thought needs to go into it before it can be realised. I wonder if it would appeal to others interested in helping to enrich the experience of walking the Coast Path?

**Andrew Green**

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## Swansea Copper Ore Barques

The copper barque – the sailing vessel that linked Swansea to the wider world in the 19th century – was a workaday affair. It was sturdily built to carry Welsh coal on its outward passage and copper ore on the homeward leg. Copper barques were once a very familiar sight in Swansea Bay. The 1830s saw a major expansion in the number of copper barques serving Swansea. This was a moment when Swansea's copper industry went global, drawing on ores from all around the world, from Cuba, Australia and Chile. Home waters could be treacherous, especially around the Cornish coast, but seafarers from South Wales now had to cover greater distances and venture into enormously threatening environments. Copper barques had to clear the Caribbean before the hurricane season began. They had to negotiate the howling southern oceans. Worst of all, they had to fight their way around Cape Horn if they were to load with Chilean ore.

**Professor Chris Evans**

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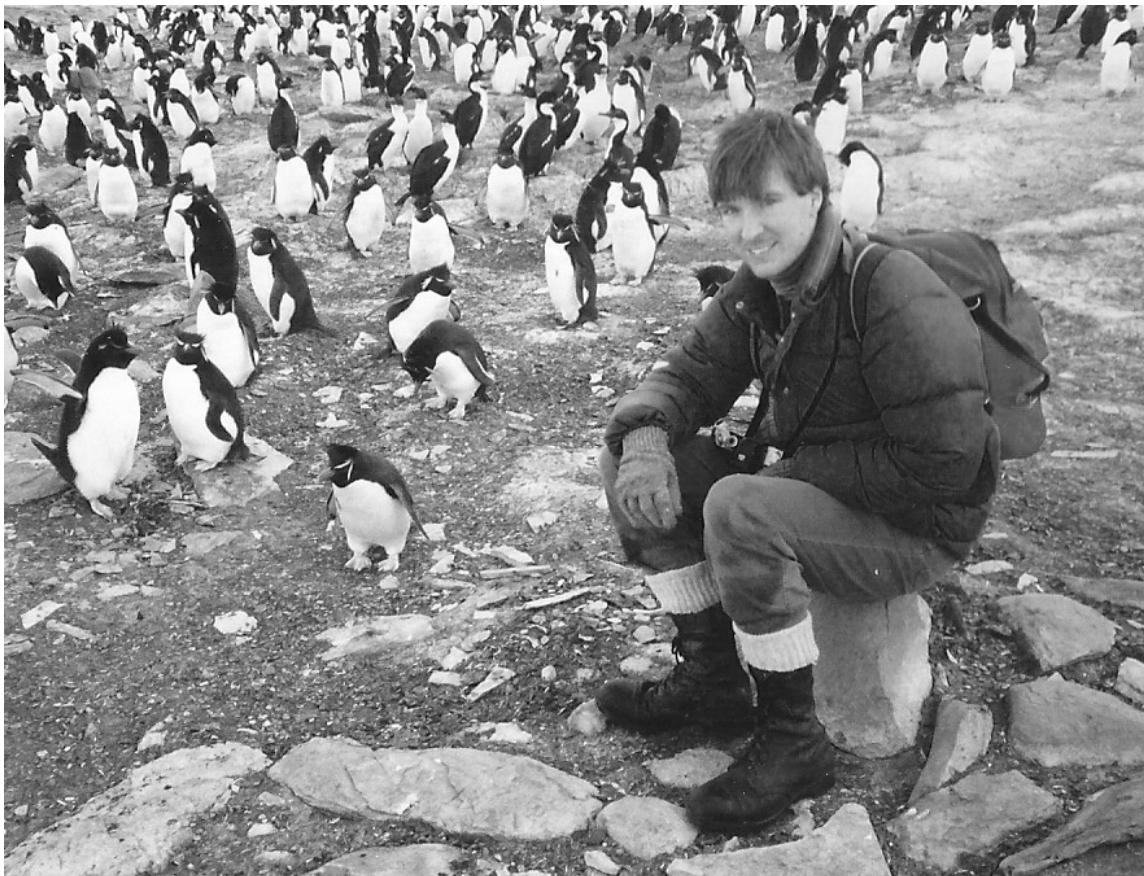
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**Sheila Crutchley, Jean Webber, Roy Fisher, Caroline Lewis, Mark Williams.**

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# The Falkland Islands

## A trip to remember



It was 1982, the Falklands Conflict was over and I was on my way to catch a plane to Cape Town. On arrival I made my way to the port and found the MV England, a cruise liner that used to be a ferry boat to Holland. But it was no ordinary cruise I was taking. The journey on the ship took two weeks, two weeks of rough seas across the roaring forties, all the way to the Falkland Islands.

We moored against another ship at Mount Pleasant which was to be our home. We had come to build a road, an airport and a military camp. When the MV England had unloaded us

***Our arrival was dismal, the weather cold and windy, the destination just a desolate empty building site.***

and the cargo she set off on her journey back to Cape Town to pick up another load of men and cargo. We now had just the other old ship where we could eat and make our recreation, we were to sleep and work in freezing cold porta cabins. The first people on site were surveyors, and PSA (property services abroad) personnel who laid out plans for the roads and airport and of course, Alan the architect. Soon work began and better sleeping accommodation and

offices were built. Warm at last. The carpenters in their spare time managed to build a squash court in the bowels of the ship- the only disadvantage being that you had to climb down a nearly vertical ladder to reach it.



My office and container for my motor bike

One of my first jobs was to set up a drawing office and look after the plans of the building site. The only raw materials on the island were water, sand and stone. As the surveyors made changes, the revised plans would be sent back to the London office. For approval. Once final plans were mapped and approved, the excavators went in and digging commenced but first they had to quarry the stone with which to make concrete to line the road. Our office compound was 5 miles away from the building site, Land Rovers were shipped from the UK for the office staff to use and buses laid on for the manual workers. The tracks were bumpy, covered in mud and the journeys hazardous. Breakdowns happened all the time.



Initially, there were only 200 workers to begin with but the numbers soon grew to 2000. At the time, this outnumbered the native population of 1800, most of whom lived in Port Stanley. There were also 6000 military personnel stationed in Port Stanley who lived in huge Hotel ships. The war had ended 6 months ago and the countryside was bleak and strewn with debris from the fighting. Signs everywhere warned of mine fields left by the Argentinians.

Those that were near tracks where people might walk were fenced off but others, in more remote

sites, had only a skull and cross bones to warn you of the hazards. Though the war was over, there were still hidden dangers, as well as mines there were deep peat bogs to be avoided when out walking.

*If you were lucky, while looking out to sea, you might catch a glimpse of whales and dolphins.*

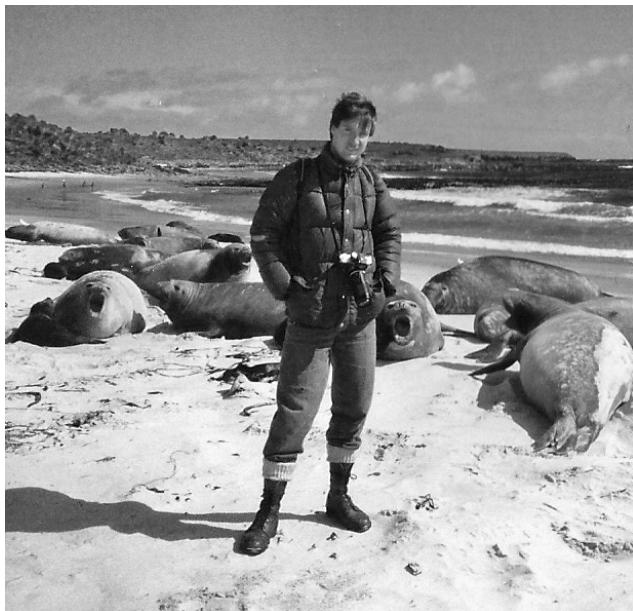
The most interesting places to walk were the beaches which were alive with penguins, elephant seals and sea lions. They were quite unafraid of people and you could sit quietly surrounded by them. The birds were spectacular and numerous, among them were cara cara, peregrine falcons and cormorants. Surprisingly, there were also barn owls and meadowlarks

There are over two hundred different species of birds to be found on the islands. Lots of birds, but no trees, although attempts have been made to grow them. With no trees to protect, the wind whistled through the island.



A memorial cross at Mount Pleasant

The locals when you met them were quite friendly, but some of the men were worried that you might try to steal their women. A lot of them were from Australia and worked as sheep shearers. I was lucky to take trips on the small plane 'The Islander', the best means of transport. One of the places visited was Sea Lion Island, a tiny island of only 3sq miles, made of sandstone and mudstone.



When I visited, just one man was living there. I think now it is a popular tourist destination; people going to view the breeding colonies of sea lions and southern elephant seals and of course, the various breeds of penguins.

I was also lucky that I had my own motor bike. Fortunately it was shipped over to me early on as later the firm decided not to allow any more bikes on the island. It was a rough trial bike, just as well as there were only rough trails to travel on. This meant I could explore the island and reach other settlements. Farm stations were scattered around and they always made me welcome.



*While I was there I helped to design some of the official Falkland Island stamps that were used on the first day cover when His Royal Highness, Prince Andrew, opened Mount Pleasant Airport.*

The dirt tracks we drove on were treacherous, you could just about reach 6mph in a land rover. The road to Port Stanley was the last thing to get built. It was kept isolated.

My first trip back home was by the military route, flying in a DC10 to RAF Brize Norton, via Ascension Island to refuel. The new airport was built because there was no airstrip big enough to transport large numbers of military personnel. The work I did was for the conglomerate Laing, Mowlem and ARC (otherwise known as LMA) in partnership with the government body PSA

I worked by contract and stayed for over two years until the work was completed. By then I was looking forward to exchanging penguins and Caracara for London sparrows and ducks. The runway was built, I was able to jet my way back direct to Brize Norton.

**Mark Williams**

# **For a Reporter, Nothing Beats Going and Seeing**



## **Trevor Fishlock**

For a reporter nothing beats going and seeing. The heart of the matter is to talk to people and see events through their eyes, how their lives are shaped by frontiers, landscape, history and conflict.

I first went to the North West Frontier of Pakistan and then into the mountains and valleys of Afghanistan, to see something of the war between the Afghan mujahidin and the Russian invaders of their country.

The teeming city of Peshawar, close to the ancient highway of the Khyber Pass, told some of the story. Thousands of Afghan refugees,

fleeing the Russian bombing of their villages, crowded large camps around the city. Hospital beds were full of wounded men. An endless traffic of Afghan fighters, forerunners of the Taliban, moved to and fro across the border.

But verifying the colourful accounts of the fighting was impossible. An American reporter and I knew that, if we could travel in Afghanistan, we would experience only a fragment of the war. But seeing it at close quarters, and talking to the people, we would certainly gain a better picture of how it was being fought.

After some discussion a mujahidin group agreed to take us over the Khyber and into Afghanistan. We bought grubby shirts, baggy trousers and berets from the warriors, dyed our hair black on their instructions, stopped shaving and waited. At Dean's Hotel three days later we answered a knock in the middle of the night and were taken to a bus bound for the Khyber.

We feigned sleep under blankets to avoid detection by Pakistan border guards, then transferred to a cattle truck and joined a group of 35 mujahidin. In the darkness, we were soon climbing a mountain out of the Pass. Several gruelling hours later a whispered word came down the line: 'Afghanistan.' We were in.

We climbed and walked all night. Dawn showed us snowy mountains and tumbling streams, green terraces planted with vegetables and dotted with sheep and goats. In the first 24 hours we walked for 21, relieved by brief stops for prayer. We watched the fighters lap water from a puddle, like cats.

We had vanished into Afghanistan. In this wild countryside there were no telephones, no vehicles, no means of

contacting anyone outside.

We had little food and spare clothing.

We carried notebooks, cameras, a water bottle and a blanket.

We heard the boom

***We had vanished into Afghanistan. In this wild countryside there were no telephones, no vehicles, no means of contacting anyone outside.***

of distant artillery. We encountered bands of armed Afghans. They waved at our column and called out in Pashto: 'May you never be tired.'

Towards evening we marched into a village, all of us drooping with fatigue. 'Here,' I recorded, 'the mujahidin were among friends, greeting villagers with hugs, gently tugging the

grey beards of old men to show their respect. We shook hands with everybody. Small boys gathered to watch us drink tea. A youth poured water over our hands, the prelude to a meal. A cloth was spread on the hardened earth floor of a house and a dozen of us squatted around it. Fire smoke pricked our eyes. Fresh flat loaves were dealt like playing cards. The aroma was ambrosial, the taste and texture wonderful. We tore the bread and dipped it into spinach and curd. Everyone had a savage hunger. After the meal, we two foreigners were shown to rickety string beds, in a corner of the room, and given pungent quilts. In the half-second of consciousness before sleep slammed down, I was aware of our companions murmuring around the fire and the hiss of their spittle in the embers.'

At daybreak scouts led the way through the mountains. Crossing rivers and open ground we split into groups of three or four, 100 yards apart, to present a smaller target to the feared Russian helicopter gunships.



When a helicopter was sighted we went to earth. By the time we heard the rotors overhead we were curled under our blankets, imitating boulders. From the cover of a stone wall we watched a gunship rocketing a village in a valley below.

Three days after leaving Peshawar we filed up a steep path to the mujahidin strong point of Torabora. Its caves would later be the refuge of Osama bin-Laden. The men here were lean and worn, living on bread and spinach, tea and sugar.

Their commander was a friendly former teacher, who spoke some English. From Torabora he sent men on raids to enemy bases to steal guns and ammunition. Russian-trained Afghan army deserters bolstered his force. He told me he was confident the mujahidin would eventually drive the invaders out. They had not learned the lessons of geography and history, he said, adding with a smile: 'You are British, you could tell them.'

After three days in Torabora a guide took us down the mountain to Jalalabad. Evidently he felt uneasy about being so close to the city. As darkness fell he led us into a small house. The occupants were scared, but gave us some bread.

A boy ducked into the room and whispered a few words to our mujahidin guide. Alarmed, he rose at once, grabbed his Kalashnikov and, curtly ordering us to follow him, started running. Tripping in the darkness, panting and breathless, we did our best to keep up. We were exhausted when we reached a house. Here, said our guide, we were safe. We had fled the other house because soldiers were nearby.

Next day we were passed on to a frontier smuggler who was off to sell a large cake of opium in the Khyber Pass. He did not carry it himself. It was on the back of a youth.

The smuggler offered to guide us back to Pakistan for £15, our lives in his hands. It took three days and nights. He never failed to find us shelter in humble houses and tea and bread. On the last day he led us up a steep mountain path and we crossed into Pakistan. He went off to sell his opium in the Khyber. We found a bus going to Peshawar. We sent telexes to our newspapers to report our return. At Dean's Hotel we were reunited with our typewriters. The keys clattered.

### ***Nothing beats going and seeing.***



# **Griffith John and Wuhan**

## **The Legacy**

In the early 1990s I worked in Wuhan, Central China. It was only a year after the events on Tiananmen Square. I found myself alone in the huge, sprawling metropolis of Wuhan, China's fifth major city and situated at the crossroads of that enormous Country. The people were very kind to me even though there was still a feeling of unease and the City still had the 'jitters'. At this time, day--to--day living for most people in Wuhan was difficult as the City adjusted to life after the events of June 4th 1989. The West had looked to Shanghai to erupt after Beijing but the Chinese had looked at Wuhan, as it was where the 1911 Revolution had started. This was before mobile phones, the web etc. Fax machines had only just appeared in China. Such were the limitations of communicating using these machines (that often did not work) within China that, when I wanted an international flight back to the UK, it was easier to fax my husband, Barry in Swansea and he would then fax Beijing to book the tickets and vice versa! Also, my salary was paid in Foreign Exchange Certificates (FEC) and not the local currency--Chinese Renminbi. Shops in Wuhan, at the time, did not accept FEC; the currency regulations prohibited Westerners from using Reminbi. In reality, the use of FEC was restricted to hotels and the Friendship Stores where Westerners were able to shop.

Wuhan was where the Swansea--born missionary, Griffith John, had spent fifty years of his life (1861--1911). Wuhan would have been equally as difficult city for him to work in, and, at least, there was a bridge across the Yangtze in 1990, which, although had a permanent traffic jam, made it an easier crossing of the river than by boat in his day.

The year 2012 was the Centenary of Griffith John's death. Barry and I visited Wuhan in October of that year to discover what, if any, legacy there remained of Griffith John. The Wuhan I had known had very largely disappeared. Now there are skyscrapers, five--star hotels, shopping malls, multi--lane highways, status cars. It is a much more affluent Wuhan!

During our stay in the City, we worked with the Curator of the Wuhan Museum and two of her staff. They had been doing research on our behalf. I had asked them to find out if any schools, hospitals and churches established by Griffith John still remained in the City. Our colleagues from the Museum showed us that Griffith John's influence in the 21st--century was still visible in Wuhan.

A school, established by Griffith John in 1904, is now known as NUMBER 4 MIDDLE SCHOOL. The main part of the school was brand-- new but alongside it were two older buildings--the former 'Griffith John School' and a church -- a pretty redbrick building that is now used as the Art Department

and studio. Students surrounded us to ask what we were doing and out came their mobile phones to record the occasion. What would Griffith John have made of it? They were proud to show us the land purchased by Griffith John for a playing field. It was now the School's sports stadium. The 'Griffith John School' had the first football team in Wuhan.





### Ena and Barry at Number 4 Middle School

When I worked in Wuhan there existed only one river--bridge across the Yangtze. Now there are eight bridges and a motorway tunnel. We crossed 'under' the Yangtze to the part of the City called Wuchang. The authorities are now preserving the old district as a place of historical interest. We walked along an old cobbled street with pretty little houses, on either side, some of which were being turned into craft shops and coffee shops. It was delightful in the autumn sunshine. We could hear young children's voices coming from further along the street. On a step beside the road, sat about twenty little 2 and 3--year--olds practising their English. The little ones were learning to say "Please" and "Thank You" and turned towards to say "Good Morning"! It was delightful!

Further along the street, we could see a building with a cross on it. As we drew near we heard singing coming from inside. It was a little church that had been founded by Griffith John. The singing was coming from a ladies' choir practising a hymn in front of the altar. It was very moving -- a very special moment! We had come all this way to find a legacy of Griffith John and here it was!



On the same road was a building hidden by large wooden doors. I peeked through the gaps in the wooden planks and saw a very beautiful building. A lady called out for us to use the main entrance. Here was another legacy to Griffith John; formally a hospital built by him; now, 'The Hospital for Traditional Chinese Medicine'.

We then returned to the part of the City called Hankou by crossing over one of the bridges to visit the Glory Church built in 1931 to celebrate the centenary of Griffith John's birth. It is an imposing redbrick building and is now preserved as having architectural merit. Barry and I were amazed to learn that about 800 to 1000 people regularly attend Sunday services. There are photos of Griffith John in the foyer and, also, one of the former Archbishop of Canterbury, Dr Rowan Williams when he visited Wuhan on his tour of China in 2006.



us



The following day, Barry and I walked to Union Hospital as it was very near our hotel. Our colleagues from the Museum had told that there was a bust of Griffith John in the grounds of the Hospital. As we were taking photos of the bust, a man appeared from nowhere and, in very good English, he said, "This man did good to the Chinese people", smiled and then walked away. This was another very special moment!

Since our visit the College of Medicine at Swansea University has established links with Wuhan Union Hospital. In late autumn 2012 a copy of the bust was presented to the College of Medicine and is on display at Swansea Museum. Doctors from Union Hospital made the presentation during a visit to the College of Medicine. Barry and I, on the same occasion, presented an 'Onllwyn Plate' to the doctors in memory of Griffith John whose image is on the Plate (As a boy Griffith John had worked at the Onllwyn Colliery shop and given his first public sermon in the Village). The Plate may now be seen in the Union Hospital Museum in Wuhan.

Our visit had demonstrated that Griffith John's legacy is very much alive in Wuhan. Our experiences of discovering this legacy will live with us for many years.

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Photographs by Barry Niedergang**



# Peripatetic Potters

There has always been a professional workforce who move around the centres of trade, usually heavy industries, such as iron, steel and coal. It should also be considered as to how mobile the skilled workers and craftsmen in the pottery trade were, often going overseas to work. Josiah Wedgwood addressed the potters about working in foreign parts. This speech entitled *AN ADDRESS TO THE WORKMEN IN THE POTTERY ON THE SUBJECT OF ENTERING INTO THE SERVICE OF FOREIGN MANUFACTURES* by Josiah Wedgwood FRS., Potter to her Majesty, Newcastle, Staffordshire was published by J. Smith in 1783.

***When the Swansea Pottery was founded in 1764 on the site of the old copper works by William Coles, there were few skilled potters in the area.***

Prior to 1764 there were a few pot makers with their own small primitive kilns making basic domestic wares for a local market out of locally sourced clay, often dug from The Burrows, an area running from the river along to Sketty Lane.

Little is known of the earliest period of Swansea Pottery and few records survive but the role of William Cole remains much underestimated. He encouraged workers from the established Staffordshire Potteries to come to Swansea for the formation of a remarkable ceramic works that was to last for just over a century. Amongst the first batch of potters to answer his appeal was Ralph Ridgway of Great Chell (after the failure of his own pottery). Having recently become a widower, he arrived with some of his younger children, George, Job and a baby daughter. One of the celebrated Wedgwood family, Thomas, also coming with him. Job Ridgway served his apprenticeship here before returning to Staffordshire where he eventually established his own pottery, which prospered and was continued in turn by his two sons. Later in the 1780's Josiah Ball came from

Staffordshire. He married here and a number of his large family, both sons and daughters worked at the pottery, both in the manufacture and decoration of the ware.

In the early years of the 19th century William Bryant came from Bristol where his family for many years had been manufacturers of clay tobacco pipes. He worked at the Cambrian Pottery during the Haynes/Dillwyn period before moving to the rival Glamorgan Pottery during its lifetime (1814-1839) and finally to the South Wales Pottery, Llanelli (who purchased much of the plant after the Glamorgan Pottery was bought out and closed down by Lewis Llewelyn Dillwyn).

About the same time James Brindley was engaged as a copper plate engraver at the Cambrian Pottery. Engraving a number of celebrated and well known transfer patterns - now highly desirable, such as the Peace of Amiens, Napoleon Dethroned, Peace and Plenty, a variation of George Morelands 'Pedlars' with the sign post inscribed 'To Neath'. He also engraved the printing plates for the service, which became known at a later date as the Lady Seaton Service from the original artwork of Henry Morris. Arthur Jones, Esq., of Bryn Newydd, Sketty Green, commissioned this service and it may have been made for the wedding breakfast on the occasion of the marriage of his daughter Sarah to J. H. Vivian (1816). By 1819 James Brindley was at the Whitehaven Pottery Cumbria, and may have returned to Swansea for a short period before taking up work in Staffordshire where it would appear from the number of patterns bearing his name in the Ridgway Pattern Books of the 1830's and 40's he worked productively for many years.

Henry Morris, one of Swansea's finest decorators, was born in London in 1799, the son of a Pembrokeshire man and his wife a lady of French extraction. In 1814 aged 15, he was apprenticed as a decorator at the Cambrian pottery under Lewis Western Dillwyn proving himself to be a most able floral painter. Moved to the porcelain department during its

productive period he came under the watchful and most able eye of William Billingsley one of the most outstanding potters and decorators of the time. After porcelain production ceased, Henry Morris was amongst those who decorated the stock of wares in the white for the final sale. It is said that he left Swansea for a number of years and was a decorator in Staffordshire and London although no specimens of his work have been identified. However he was in Llanelly at the time of his daughters' birth in 1828 and in Swansea when his son was born in 1832. After 1840 he decorated china from his home in Pleasant Street, having constructed a muffle kiln in the garden. He continued in this work until the age of 75 when suffering a fall his sight became impaired. He ended his days living with his son a brass founder on the Strand and died there in August 1880. He is buried in Dan-y-Graig cemetery where rather touchingly examples of the tulips he painted so beautifully have been planted by his gravestone. Today he is rightly recognised as one of Swansea's great flower painters.

If Henry Morris is considered an outstanding artist then William Billingsley must rank as one of the finest who ever worked in this country. Billingsley along with his daughters Lavina and Sarah (and later, son-in-law Samuel Walker) spent the greater part of his working life travelling.

Known as the wandering arcanist he is now considered a genius and it is thanks to Billingsley and his supporters that we have the world famous Nantgarw porcelain.

Joseph Furber, a potter presser who lived near Henry Morris in Bellevue Street came from Stoke on Trent again marrying a local woman. Along with his sons he had a long connection with the pottery. The Furbers also had a long association with the church attending St. Mary's, known at the time to be The Potters' Church, being faithful Anglicans and involved in many church activities.

Lastly mention should be made of Thomas James, a local man who closes the chapter on Swansea pottery. Born at his parents' farm on Kilvey Hill. James spent his entire working life at the Cambrian Pottery working his way through all departments. His final job was

*These exhausting journeys, criss-crossing the country, often by foot, were done partly to avoid creditors and partly in search for the chance to work and perfect the manufacture of porcelain.*

as a traveller for the firm. Firstly travelling to the West Country and then further a-field to the Channel Islands, who placed worthwhile orders. He would spend a month on his travels, establishing contacts and taking orders then a month in Swansea to see everything fulfilled and despatched before setting out again. He is recorded as being the last man working in the pottery, locking up and handing the keys to the representatives of the new owners in 1870.



Nantgarw porcelain plate

This is the very briefest and inadequate account of the journeys and labours of a few of the potters who have helped to firmly place Swansea in the annals of ceramic history.

We take leave of the potters with a verse from the Pioneers Song, dated Tunstall April 9th 1845, and printed in the Potters Examiner and Workman's Advocate.

*But away with the pain – we shall see them again!*

*We are only preparing a way for the rest:*

*The blow ! Breezes blow ! As onward we go –*

*The Potters shall yet have a home in the West !*

**Robert Leonard**

# Ethiopian Travels



Mount Entoto

Ethiopia is one of the thirty poorest countries on the planet. It is land-locked, bordered by Eritrea, Djibouti, Somalia, Kenya, South Sudan, and Sudan. The FCO advises against travel near any of the borders. The risks are war, insurrection, terrorism, and kidnapping. The border with Somalia is shown on maps as a dotted line.

Like many other poor countries Ethiopia has a history of revolution and corruption which it has not yet left behind. Poverty is extreme, the streets populated with beggars and crippled war victims. Life is hard, with little if any state support for the 80 million citizens. Crime is low, crime against visitors almost unknown in the capital Addis Ababa.

Come again? In Addis, escorted by Genet my female Coptic Christian guide and travelling crammed into the ubiquitous public minibuses, heavily armed police and army everywhere, I never once felt threatened. I have been in some dodgy situations in the Caribbean and Central America but that was not repeated here.

Why is Ethiopia, with memory of the Red Terror and 100,000 deaths barely twenty years old and with fighting today on all its borders, so safe for the traveller who follows the rules? Perhaps it is because Ethiopia has never been occupied by a foreign power. The nearest to achieving it were the Italians in WW2, but they never really

established themselves and were ejected with the help of the British. Crucially, Britain did not attempt to stay in their place. Winston Churchill Avenue sweeps magnificently through the centre of Addis.

Perhaps it is because Ethiopia has a legitimate claim to be the oldest nation on earth. Perhaps, though Genet laughed at the Darwinism, it is because Homo Sapiens originated in the Great Rift Valley. I visited Lucy, the first hominid, in the National Museum.

This was a work trip, inspecting a college for a British examination board. Like any sensible traveller I arranged time for exploration before and after. It was a brief trip with no opportunity to stray more than a few miles outside Addis to Mount Entoto, to be followed up with an extended visit. I collected impressions.

Addis Ababa hosts the secretariat of the African Union. One of its semi-annual meetings was underway. Motorcades roared hither and thither, traffic halted by police and army alike. It is always somewhat alarming to see how casually weapons are handled. I saw several shoulder slung AK47s with the safety off.

The few new vehicles belong to the government and embassies. (The US embassy looks like something on a hill in ancient Rome.) There are

few vehicles per head of population, but plenty of them nevertheless. Traffic laws are not visible. Imagine the Place de la Bastille without road markings, rules of precedence, recognisable rotation, or the Gallic driver's sense of courtesy and fair play.

This was the wedding season. Getting married can cost more than buying a house. The wedding ceremony is followed by a raucous car procession to a park, where the bride and groom with their

four bridesmaids and four best men perform a traditional dance.

Music is supplied by a saxophonist – Ethiopians love the instrument – and everything is captured on video. In two hours at the park we saw at least five wedding parties. The next day there is a reception from the bride's parents. All ten main characters

have a new costume for the second day. See how the cost ramps up?

Haile Selassie was deposed by Marxist elements in the army in 1974. The Derg were in turn unseated in 1991, but not before they had unleashed the Red Terror. The country made great steps in reconstruction under the leadership of the prime minister Meles Zenawi (who died in office in 2012). Selassie and his wife are entombed in Holy Trinity Cathedral. The priest who showed us round was suspicious of the US dollar bill I proffered until it had been translated into birr. Sylvia Pankhurst, friend and adviser to Selassie, is the only foreigner buried at Holy Trinity Cathedral.

I was allowed to photograph the tomb and throne of Haile Selassie inside the cathedral, but armed soldiers prevented photography of the grave of Meles Zenawi outside.

I asked if Bob Geldof and Live Aid had really made a difference in 1985, at the height of the Derg era. I was left in no doubt that many more than the 400,000 who died in 1983–85 would have perished without the efforts of the uncompromising Irishman. There is a place for him at Holy Trinity alongside Sylvia Pankhurst.

The Mercato is said to be Africa's biggest market. I believe that. The market is 6km by 4km, with everything imaginable on sales. Food comes in from the countryside, bought at the entrances to the city by traders. A whole huge block is taken up by men repairing and recreating everything automotive. Imported goods are mainly plastics from China. This was the only place Genet advised me to take particular care about pickpockets. My 'care' was no more than I take in Swansea Market.



Holy Trinity Cathedral

Ethiopia is the home of coffee. There is a ritual associated with drinking it. In a business environment it saves a lot of time if you ask for tea. The clock in the coffee shop was six hours behind my watch – the day starts at dawn,

0600. The Coptic calendar used in Ethiopia and Egypt is seven years and eight months behind the Gregorian calendar. I felt young!

Addis Ababa is at 8,000 feet. I don't normally puff walking up hills.

Get names right. Genet explained. "My name is Genet. My card says Ms Genet Mengistu but don't call me Ms Mengistu – that is my father's name! Why call me that?"

On the last night my hosts took me to a popular restaurant for the traditional meal of injera – a sourdough flatbread served with delicious spicy meats and vegetables – and music and dancing from the many ethnic groups of the country. When we came out the jeep had a flat tyre. A man was crouched asleep against the wall. He woke, saw what we were doing, and offered to change the wheel. When he was done we tried to give him some birr for saving us a messy job in the dark. He grinned, shook our hands, and flatly refused the money. Perhaps another reason Ethiopia does not threaten is pride.

John Ashley

# Edgar Evans

## An Unsung Hero

Edgar Evans, was the sixth of twelve children born to Sarah and Charles Evans. He was born on 13th April 1876 in the village of Middleton on the Gower peninsular. By 1883 the family had moved several times eventually coming to live in William Street in the Sandfields area of Swansea.

His father Charles was a mariner, a brave Cape Horner, a sailor who sailed around the Cape Horn on voyages that could last for many months. Even after he lost a leg, he continued working as a Quartermaster, with a local firm called Coastlines, plying between Swansea and Glasgow.

The house in William Street was a typical working class home, of the ‘two up two down’ variety in Swansea’s growing centre. It was a very different environment to the sparsely populated area of Gower where they had lived before and the family’s health began to suffer as they became affected by typhus, and diphtheria. Sadly, some of Edgar’s siblings died and records tell of nine children who passed away. Both the water and the air was contaminated, largely by the tinplate industries and the smelting of copper that polluted the town.

Nevertheless, Edgar thrived, grew into a strong boy and had the advantage of being able to rush from school, down to Swansea beach and the sea, as did many of the Sandfield’s families. He attended St Helen’s School where a good standard was set by the headmaster, Lewis Schlewig who helped shape the children’s future



characters. Young Edgar learnt reading, writing, mathematics, geography and musket drilling. He also had a good singing voice and a strong love of literature. Geography would have stimulated his pride and knowledge of the British Empire and the pre-eminence of Queen Victoria and Great Britain that was backed by the Royal Navy.

He continued his schooling as a ‘half timer’ which allowed him to spend half a day working as a messenger boy at the post office in Castle Street, Swansea, close to the drill hall.

From there the proximity of North dock would no doubt have created an interest in the sailor’s stories that he heard, describing different lives in strange and exotic places. He became determined to go to sea and joined the Royal navy as a boy seaman on HMS Ganges at Falmouth. A year later he became a Boy 1st class and his future was set.

Edgar had grown into a fine looking, well-built young man and as strapping, fit eighteen year old, he joined HM Excellent, Whale Island, Portsmouth, as a physical instructor. Later on in his career, he caught the attention of a young lieutenant Robert Scott, when they both served on HM Majestic. Edgar's gunnery team won awards at national competitions and he eventually was promoted to become a Petty officer (first class). His service record shows him to be a young man of ability, strength and determination. Such gifts made him ideal for his destiny.

Scott chose him to be a member of the doomed expedition to the South Pole on the ill-fated Terra Nova which sailed from Cardiff. Huge, bullnecked with a strong, muscular body, he was one of the five persons selected for the final push to the Pole. He was responsible for the transport, and pulling the sledges with all their equipment. The group achieved their aim and arrived at the South Pole on 17th January 1912. Scott was devastated to find that Norwegian explorer Roald Amundsen had arrived before them. Dispirited, exhausted and suffering from the severe cold temperatures, they made their way back to their base, but they never arrived.

Edgar hurt his head when he fell into a crevasse and his poor condition delayed the team and diminished their food supply. They were critically short of food and almost starving. Evans suffering from frostbitten hands and badly injured, succumbed to the cold and was the first one to die, followed soon after by the others. Sub-zero temperatures, hunger and extreme exhaustion caused them all to perish.

***Later on in his career,  
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Edgar Evans, a lad from Swansea, born in the Gower peninsular, earned the respect of the other members of the expedition for his heroism, strength and dedication to his duty. Scott recognised Edgar Evan's qualities and held him in high regard with a loyalty which lasted through Antarctica according to his diaries 'What an invaluable assistant he has been'.

At a service held to commemorate his centenary, the Lord Mayor of Swansea, Councillor Iwan Richard said: "Edgar Evans is one of the greatest adventurers Wales has ever produced and his story still commands legendary status, a century after he reached the South Pole".

**Sid Kidwell (whose grandfather went to school with Edgar Evans)**



Edgar Evans will be honoured with a Blue Plaque to be unveiled on Thursday November 27th 2014 at Middleton on Gower, the village where he was born.

# Branch Fellowship

## Dr Fred Cowley



*Royston Kneath*

The Swansea branch of the Historical Association granted its first Honorary Branch Fellowship to Dr Fred Cowley in recognition of his significant contribution to the study, appreciation and promotion of history in south-west Wales.

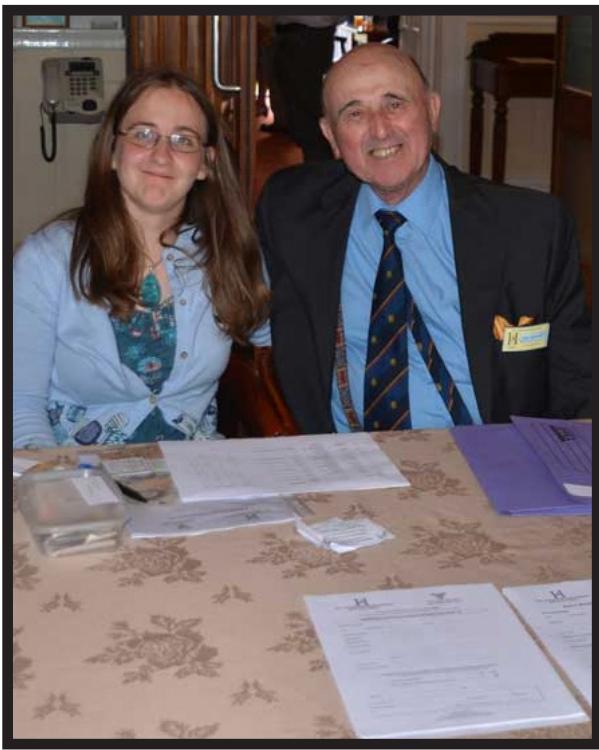
After graduating from the University College of Wales Swansea, Dr Cowley became sub-librarian (Readers' Services) at the university, and pursued research into the monastic history of south Wales. He has published a number of articles on the ecclesiastical history of this region, particularly of the churches at Llanmadoc and Cheriton, St Paul's in Sketty, and Clyne Chapel in Blackpill. He is the author of *The Monastic Order in South Wales 1066–1349*, which was first published in 1977 and is still the definitive work on the subject.

The event took place in Sketty Hall on August 13th and was attended by branch members. Emeritus Professor Ralph Griffiths, president of the branch, spoke highly of Dr Cowley's academic career and his success as an author. Branch chairman Dr John Law endorsed those remarks, as he presented Dr Cowley with a framed reproduction of a medieval charter

given to Margam Abbey, and branch executive secretary Colin James presented the Certificate of Fellowship.

Dr Cowley gave a very stimulating talk and thanked the branch for the honour that they had given him. He told us of his visits to Caldey Island, one of Britain's holy islands, and of his meetings with the Cistercian monks who live there. In particular, he spoke of an American monk, Damien Morgan, and of his earlier life as a pilot in the last war. The effect of slaughtering so many people in bombing raids in Japan, with the immense loss of life inflicted, led to great feelings of guilt and a nervous breakdown. He took to religion, preaching and trying to convert people in the street, which led to his arrest and being sent to prison. When released he went back to Massachusetts, then travelled to Belgium and finally came to the monks at Caldey Abbey. There he enjoyed a life, working hard in the fields and raising cattle, a life in which he found peace and tranquillity.

All present, in expressing their appreciation of Dr Cowley's address, warmly welcomed this, their first Fellow.



*Royston Kneath*

## A social event at Sketty Hall

was the venue for the Honoury Fellowship award.

Organised by the Chairman Dr John Law, members and guests enjoyed a pleasant get together, a chance to meet and talk to one another. It was a sunny day and it was possible to sit in the Italian gardens and relax. There was a book stall in one of the rooms with books donated by members, providing extra funds for the branch. Previous copies of Chronicle were on display so people could collect all five past issues.

A warm welcome awaited guests who were greeted by Claire and Sid. A splendid buffet supper and a glass of wine was provided in the dining room, a chance for our chairman to thank everyone for their support of this event. The committee is thinking of holding the AGM in Sketty Hall.



The Winter issue  
of Chronicle will  
commemorate the  
First World War.

Please let the  
editor have any  
written articles,  
letters, postcards,  
photographs etc by  
mid-November.



## Book Review      Harvest of Gold

A wonderful collection of songs inspired by local legends and social history. Songs of smugglers, shipwrecks, cockle sellers and the ordinary people who lived in Victorian times in and around Gower and Swansea. People whose lives were shaped by the copper and brass industry, the docks, fishing and the brave Cape Horners. The songs are original and written by two of our new members, Carole Etherton and Andrew McKay.

Each song has two pages, one with the music and a narrative about the characters, on the second page are all the words and choruses in full. If you are musical, all the better but

with lots of old photographs included, this makes a fascinating book to read, packed full of stories and legends.

# HA Swansea Branch Programme 2014/15

Saturdays at 11.00, National Waterfront Museum



**15 November 2014, 11am**

Professor John France

Warfare in the Age of the Crusades: A Clash of Contrasts

**20 December 2014, 11am**

Professor Michael Franklin (Swansea University)

'Orientalist' Jones Heads West; or, Gwilym ap Shôn beside the Toaw and the Tivy.

**17 January 2015, 11am**

Professor Chris Williams (Cardiff University)

Cartooning the First World War

**31 January 2015, 11am**

Robert Protheroe-Jones

Working for Victory: Welsh Industry and the Great War

**14 February 2015, 11am**

Glenys Davies

Working for Victory: Researching Avenging Angels, a novel of World War One

## Membership Form

Name .....

Address .....

.....

Phone .....

Email .....

Individual membership: £10.

Concessionary membership: £5.

Family (household) membership: £15.

Student (to 30 September 2014): £3

Cheques to *Historical Association Swansea Branch*:

Membership Secretary

Historical Association

156 Chemical Road

Morrison

Swansea SA6 6JQ

[www.haswansea.org.uk](http://www.haswansea.org.uk)