ANGLESEY ANTIQUARIAN SOCIETY
CYMDEITHAS HYNAFIAETHWYR MON

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Golygydd/Editor: Mrs. Margaret Hughes, Penymaes, Bryntirion, Llanfairpwll LL61 5YP
Ffon/Tel: Porthaethwy/Menai Bridge 712084

A REMINDER .. Have you paid your annual subscription for 1990/91? .. at the correct rate? £4 single and £6 joint. Please check, and alter your banker's order if necessary.

LIFE TODAY IS HISTORY TOMORROW

Writing a recent magazine feature article, Brian Redhead made the comment, "history is what people make of their geography". A trite phrase, perhaps, but true.

As members of an antiquarian society, we are usually accused of being interested only in the past. We are also a Field Club, but this part of our raison d'etre has tended to be played down in recent years. Now however, conservation is in fashion as changes are taking place so rapidly that everyone fears for the disappearance of tradition and heritage. Conservation on our own doorstep is challenging us to be as enthusiastic about conserving the good things of Anglesey life as we are about appreciating its past history.

Which way do we want to see Anglesey going in the future?

We have heard dire threats about the effect on our island of the A55 when completed. Will future historians regard the '80s and '90s as the time when Anglesey's future was changed irrevocably because of a great new swathe of dual carriageway which eased traffic to such an extent that it transformed the island almost into an urban area? Or do we want our landscape and way of life to remain sufficiently unique to continue to tempt those who search for the contrast of peace and quiet in a turbulent world?

At present, Anglesey's living landscape is a hotch-potch. There is countryside looking more or less as it has done for centuries. There is brash Sea-side development. There are pockets of tourism which seethe during the summer, and die in the winter. To some of us, the most attractive places are where the language still flourishes. But there are areas where you will not hear a word of Welsh from one weekend to the next. The speed of change is frightening and insiduous.

As historians - albeit, most of us, amateur historians - we should know enough about the island's past history to realise how important are our attitudes to present day trends.

What are future members of the Anglesey Antiquarian Society going to think of the way we face the changes of the last decade of the 20th century? The responsibility is ours.

CASGLIAD HYFRYD! Dyna ddisgrifiad yr Archifydd, Einion Wyn Thomas, o bapurau a dogfennau yn cynnwys cofrestru genedigaethau Eglwys Wesleaid Cymru, cylch-daleithau Caergybi, Amlwch a Biwmaris, 19-20g. sydd yn awr ym meddiant yr Archifdy. Maent ar

An article has been cut out of the only copy of this newsletter available.

taken place there during the last 100 years.

If you have not visited Penmon for some time make a date to go on a fine spring or summer day, and see what splendid work has been going on there to present this ancient corner of Anglesey in its attractive setting.

AROUND AND ABOUT

"A bit of everything" is how field officer for Anglesey for the National Trust, Bryn Jones of Gwalchmai, describes the work in which he is involved.

The Trust owns large tracts of coastline along the north of the island, and also areas of woodland at Plas Newydd, and at Vaynol on the Caernarfonshire side of the Strait. It is Bryn Jones's responsibility to look after buildings, woods and fences.

Mr. Jones is originally from Llanllyfni. He studied at Glynllifon and at Northop Horticultural College, and before joining the Trust was a lecturer in Rural Skills at Glynllifon.

At present he is busy tree-planting, and much of his work is concerned with liaising between the Trust, the tenants and the public.

After 12 months in the job, he emphasises that he works with John Williams, whose great knowledge and experience he values.

Mr. Williams, an octagenarian, has a vast knowledge of the area. Members will remember meeting him when the Society had an excursion to Castell mill and garden some time ago.

Contact can be made with Bryn Jones on Gwalchmai 720231.

CAN YOU HELP, PLEASE? Mr. Gerallt Parry, of 20 Gwel Eryri, Llandegfan, Menai Bridge, would like to obtain a copy of "The History of the Anglesey Constabulary" by Hugh Owen, published in 1952. Mr.Parry's telephone no. is 712145.

BACK TO SCHOOL

Pass any Anglesey infants' school these days and your eye will be arrested by colourful pictures done by young artists, covering the large windows. Currently, the emphasis is on spring flowers and Easter Eggs.

Reading the Log Books for Llanfairpwll British School, 1872-1898, at the Archives office in Llangefni, one cannot help but compare the situation in schools today with the spartan and strict and, it would seem, very unimaginative attitude of educationalists of a little over 100 years ago.

The British School at Llanfairpwll opened its doors on January 2nd, 1872, with 76 pupils, and its numbers fluctuated through out the period covered by the Log Books between this figure and 100. Attendance was haphazard in the beginning, with plenty of comments such as "few attended on account of the weather". Days off to attend special events were frequent - the Band of Hope meeting at Gaerwen was considered more important than lessons! There was no school on the day the foundation stone of the new chapel in the village was laid, and Sunday School trips always took precedence.

As in most country districts throughout Wales, child-power on the farms was as important as man-power. Hay-making usually put paid to school activities while the good weather held.

"The attendance was affected by the appearance of a group of mushrooms in the fields", commented the headmaster on one occasion. Another time, it was the harvesting of blackberries.

Tradition played a large part in country life, too. On December 17th, 1888, the head wrote "Christmas is approaching and the rich and wealthy distribute coals to the poor of the district. These two days are the worst yet for attendance. The habit of going about the farms begging is still alive in this district about Christmas and that also greatly affects attendance."

Lessons included arithmetic, dictation, reading, composition, singing and, for the girls, sewing. But the sewing mistress did not attend on one occasion as she was "busily engaged in preparing mourning for a family in the place for the occasion of a funeral." First things first!

Bearing in mind the complaints of the teaching profession today, it is interesting to read of similar complaints over a century ago. Lack of space in which to teach effectively, and, in particular, lack of materials. The arrival of a consignment of rulers and indiarubbers received ecstatic comment. The schoolmaster complained about bare walls, and announced with obvious delight, on one occasion, the acquisition of a map of the world and some advertising pictures.

There is frequent mention of truancy, and disinterest in lessons. "Spent most of my time in the morning with Standard I, finding them very careless with their sums - not taking enough trouble to make them neat and inclined to be inaccurate in the working of subtraction. A slight touch of the cane had the desired effect."

Teachers came and went, and the school welcomed students from Bangor to help with lessons. Voluntary helpers came in, too.

This - and a lot more - in the Llanfairpwll British School Log Books - paints a vivid picture of life in the village all those years ago.

It is available at the Archives office in Llangefni, along with similar log books for many other Anglesey schools. They are records to be treasured.

The editor of the Newsletter will welcome any contributions for the next edition, to appear in the autumn, by September 30th.