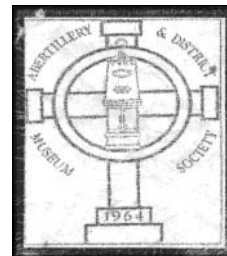


# ABERTILLERY & DISTRICT MUSEUM SOCIETY

## NEWSLETTER



January 2012

**Christmas Fete** – Although there didn't seem to be a big turnout, the event raised the impressive sum of £470 including a £50 donation from Rose Smith. A very big thank you to everyone involved. The Christmas raffle raised a further £60 - once again, many thanks to everyone.

**Wanted** – jam jars. Please bring to the Museum; our Secretary, Sandra Tranter has taken over as Museum jam maker so look out for jam for sale in the Museum café.

### Annual Dinner – 20<sup>th</sup> January

Once again this will be at the Top Hotel in Llanhilleth and will take place on Friday 20<sup>th</sup> January. Roy Pickford is collecting names and money so please contact him to book your place – 01494 213377.

### Coffee Morning – Saturday 4<sup>th</sup>

**February** – we have mentioned in previous Newsletters that a local author, Siân Price, with connections with the Museum had her book published in December. The book is called “If You're reading This – Last Letters from the Front Line” and is a compilation and commentary on the letters soldiers have written over the ages before going to battle. The letters date from the Napoleonic Wars to recent conflicts and the book has been well received. Copies are available in popular stores and at the Museum and on Saturday 4<sup>th</sup> February Siân will be coming along to tell us more about the book and how she came to write it.

### 100 Club – December 2011

No. 118	Maureen Williams	£25
No. 110	Margaret Evans	£10
No. 53	Marge Rogers	£5

### Programme Secretary needed

We still urgently need someone to take this on for the summer season onwards. Please call at the Museum or contact Peggy.

### Fundraising December £682

### Contact Names

Mrs Peggy Bearcroft, Chairperson	01495 213806
Mr Don Bearcroft, Curator	01495 213806
Mr Ron Selway, Vice Chairman	01495 215775
Mrs Sandra Tranter, Secretary	01495 215708 or 01179 600650
Mr Bernard Jones, Treasurer	01495 213185
Mrs Enid Dean, Fund raising Secretary	01495 212880
Mrs M Selway, Programme Sec	01495 211960
Mr Roy Pickford, Social Events Sec	01495 213377
Mr Bernard Hill, Asst Curator	01495 212864
Mrs Jen Price (Newsletter)	01633 482851

### Diary Dates

**Friday 20<sup>th</sup> January** – *Annual Dinner* at the Top Hotel, Llanhilleth

**Saturday 4<sup>th</sup> February** – *Coffee Morning with local author Siân Price*

Email address: [abertillerymuseum@tiscali.co.uk](mailto:abertillerymuseum@tiscali.co.uk)

Web: [www.abertilleryanddistrictmuseum.org.uk](http://www.abertilleryanddistrictmuseum.org.uk)

Details of **coffee mornings etc** are posted on the notice board at the Museum or at the following website where you can also read the Newsletter (and other local information):

[www.cwmtillery.com](http://www.cwmtillery.com)

### Museum opening times

The Museum is open to the public, **free of charge**:

**Tuesday – Thursday 10am - 1pm 2pm - 4pm**

**Friday & Saturday 10am - 1pm**

Museum phone number **01495 211140**.

Visitors and volunteers are always welcome so please call in as often as you can.

### Vice Presidents (Annual Subscription £25)

Mr Keith Dykes	Mr Carl Jones
Mrs Esme Heal	Mr Glyn Saunders
Mrs Kathleen Davies	Rev. R Watson
Mrs Margaret Herbert	Prof. Gerwyn Griffiths
Mrs Carole Brooks	Mrs Jeanette Fulton
Mr Arthur Lewis OBE	Mrs Thelma Griffiths
Mr John O Sullivan	

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### Lave Net Fishing

If you go to the Black Rock picnic area, just beyond Portskewett on the Severn Estuary you will see the buildings used by the Black Rock Lave Net Fishermen's Association. The fishermen are actively promoting the fishery as a heritage fishery and tourist attraction in their aim to keep the history and tradition of lave net fishing alive for future generations to enjoy. The Lave Net Fishermen try to keep the fishery as traditional as possible. The Lave net is still made in the traditional way by means of a "Y" shaped structure consisting of two arms called rimes which are made from locally cut willow that acts as a framework to the loosely hung net. The handle is called the rock staff and is made of ash or willow and the arms are hinged to the rock staff and are kept in position while fishing with a wooden spreader called the headboard. The actual netting is still knitted in the traditional way using a strip of wood and a needle. In the old days the nets were made of hemp twine and knitted by the Williams family of Sudbrook.

The fishing takes place on the out going tide. The fishermen walk out into the estuary with nets on shoulders to the traditional fishing grounds with the water up to their waists. The net is then opened and the rimes are locked into the head board. The net is lowered into the out going tide which then rushes through the net. A hand is then placed on the rock staff ready to push down with the other on the head board ready to pull up. With his fingers placed at the bottom meshes of the net the fisherman then waits for the fish to hit the net. The fishermen fish in two ways, either standing in a low water channel waiting for the fish to swim into the net (this is called cowering) or by the other method of watching for a splash or wake of a fish and then running to intercept the fish before it reaches deep water. The area of the Severn Estuary off Black Rock has the second highest tidal range in the world. This enables the fishermen at low tide to wade out into the river to fish. The fishermen have their own names for the places they fish eg. The Grandstand, Nesters Rock and Lighthouse Vear. These places are not mentioned on any map.

There is a new net house at the site with photographs and other information about this traditional method of fishing. For more information about open days etc, visit the following website:

<http://www.blackrocklavenets.co.uk/gallery.html>

Source – the above website

### Poetry please

#### “The Wanderers”

We wandered o'er the mountainside  
Among the fern and gorse we'd hide  
Upon a log we all would stand  
We were the princes of the land  
On a branch was tied some rope  
To take our weight, so we would hope  
We'd feel the wind arushing by  
As we tried to touch the sky  
To the dingle we would stray  
Scrumpling apples on the way  
Down the stream to catch some trout  
If someone did you'd hear a shout  
Past woodman's cottage we would roam  
Walking down the road back home  
The River Ebbw we could see  
A dirty brown from R.T.B.  
Then to the river bridge we'd go  
To stand and watch the water flow  
Just stare and then you'd give a shiver  
You seem to move and not the river  
Then off again, no more to see  
Home just in time to get some tea.

Dagworth Orville Chambers

### Book Corner

**Heads Held High** by Phil Bennett and Max Boyce, £16.99 published by Seren Press

For two weeks in October 2011, Wales held its breath. In the Rugby World Cup, with an influx of young players and probably the most exciting rugby played in the competition, Wales had negotiated a difficult qualifying group to reach a quarter final against an unbeaten Ireland side. Ireland were despatched 22:10; next up was a France side which misfired throughout the tournament. In New Zealand and at home, Wales believed; over 60,000 people watched the game at the Millennium Stadium. But injuries to key players, missed kicks, and the sending off of skipper Sam Warburton meant that Wales came up just short in a grippingly tense match they dominated. And defeat against Australia in their last game left Wales fourth. Yet this was still a time for celebration. Wales had lost to three of the world's top sides by a collective margin of five points. It couldn't have been closer, and the Wales squad could return home confident for the future with their heads held high.

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#### The Rev Wesley and the King

The visit of the Curator to the John Wesley Chapel in Bristol described in the May 2011 Newsletter brings to mind another Wesley who could have changed the course of English history following the Civil War (1642 – 49). The capture and subsequent execution of Charles 1 brought the Civil War to an end and Oliver Cromwell and Parliament became all powerful, ruling England without the monarchy or the House of Lords. When defeat became certain Charles 1 had sent his two sons to France and Charles 11 succeeded to the throne in exile. The Scots had not been consulted in the trial and execution of Charles 1 so they invited their exiled Charles 11 to return to his northern kingdom promising him a Scots army to assist in his restoration to the English throne but on very harsh terms. The 21 year old Charles 11 led this army south into England and reached Worcester but was defeated by Cromwell in August 1651.

Charles with several high ranking companions retreated from the battlefield and attempted to devise an escape route to friendly territory. His routed army was streaming north, back to Scotland while an attempt to reach Royalist Wales had to be abandoned. So, after hiding in country houses of Staffordshire Catholic supporters, including a session in an oak tree, they concluded that their best route was south in anticipation of taking a boat to France. Cromwell's forces were alerted to the fact that a substantial reward of £1000 was being offered for the capture of the king and in these circumstances the party made their way via Stratford, Cirencester, Bristol then over the Somerset border to Dorset. The travellers were accompanied by Jane Lane and later by Juliana Coningsby, relatives of theirs because they believed that female companions would allay suspicion. Charles was dressed as a servant throughout the journey and seems to have performed his duties convincingly.

They reached the village of Trent on the borders of Somerset and Dorset where at the manor house, Col. Francis Wyndham and his wife were waiting to receive them. Trent was a good hiding place, within reasonable distance of the sea so discreet enquiries about a suitable boat could begin. Col. Wyndham consulted William Ellesdean a merchant of Lyme Regis who arranged for his tenant Stephen Limbry of nearby Charmouth, the master of a coasting vessel, to take a gentleman and his servant to France on the night of Monday

23<sup>rd</sup> September. The next thing was to get rooms at Charmouth for that night and Wyndham's servant was sent to an inn – The Queens Arms with a tale of how he served a worthy nobleman who was eloping by night with an orphan maid. The romantic hostess believed the story, agreed to give them rooms and keep silent. In the afternoon the little party arrived at the inn while Ellesdean went to seek out the seaman Limbry who confirmed the arrangements. Midnight came but there was no sign of Limbry and by dawn there was no explanation as to what went wrong. The party decided that they should quickly move on and they proceeded eastwards to Bridport which was full of Parliamentary troops so they decided to return northwards back to Trent to review their position.

Later they learned that Limbry had gone home to get clean clothes for the voyage but that day a proclamation had been posted declaring death for any person to aid or conceal the king. His wife, suspecting her husband, had locked him in his bedroom and threatened to raise the alarm if he broke out. The sensible man submitted accordingly. The danger, however, was far worse because the part time ostler at The Queens Arms had noticed that the horseshoes of the strangers had been made in the north and as he was also a soldier he realised he should report this to his officer. The officer, he thought would then claim the reward, so instead he went to see the Puritan parson who was the Rev. Bartholomew Wesley, the great grandfather of John Wesley. The parson was at his devotions and could not be disturbed so it had to be the officer after all who received the information and immediately he set off eastwards with horsemen, in pursuit. Fortunately the King's party had turned north so they were safe.

The Rev. Wesley was not at all pleased when he heard the news and he accosted the landlady with "Charles Stuart lay last night in your house and kissed you at his departure" who replied "If I thought it was the King I would think better of my lips all the days of my life". So the Rev. Wesley missed an opportunity to influence the history of English monarchy.

The King's party later proceeded along the coast to the village at Shoreham and escaped to France where he lived until he was restored to the throne. After the Restoration in 1662 the Rev. Wesley was deprived of his living at Charmouth for refusing to use the Book of Common Prayer.

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MUSEUM MATTERS January 2012. An Officers account of the Christmas Truce on the Western Front in 1914.

On the 23rd we took over the trenches relieving the Grenadiers. We stood to arms as usual at 6.30 a.m. on the 25th, and I noticed that there was not much shooting; this gradually died down, and by 8 a.m. there was no shooting at all, except for a few shots on our left. At 8.30 a.m. I was looking out, and saw four Germans leave their trenches and come towards us. I went out alone, but met Barry one of our ensigns, coming out from another part of the line. By the time we got to them, they were three quarters of the way over, near our barbed wire, so I moved them back. They were private soldiers and a stretcher-bearer, their spokesman started off saying that he thought it only right to come and wish us a happy Christmas, and trusted us implicitly to the truce. He came from Suffolk where he had left his best girl. He told me that he could not send a letter to the girl, and wanted to send one through me. I made him write out a postcard in front of me, in English, and I sent it off that night, I asked them what orders they had from their officers as to men coming over to us, and they said **none**, they had just come over of goodwill. They protested that they had no feeling of enmity toward us at all, but that everything lay with their authorities, and that being soldiers they had to obey. I believe that they were speaking the truth when they said this, and that they never wished to fire a shot again. They said that unless directly ordered, they were not going to shoot again until we did. They think that our Press is to blame in working up feeling against them by publishing false 'atrocities reports'.

At 10 a.m. I was surprised to hear a din going on, not a single man was left in my trenches; they were completely denuded. I heard strains of 'Tipperary' floating down the breeze, followed by a tremendous burst of 'Deutschland uber Alles', as I got to my own Coy. H.-Q. dug-out, I saw, to my amazement, not only a crowd of about 150 British and Germans at the half-way house opposite my lines, but six or seven such crowds, all the way down our lines, extending towards the 8th Division on our right. I hustled out and asked if there were any German officers?, there were two, but had to talk to them through an interpreter, as they could not talk English or French. I explained to them that strict orders must be maintained as to meeting half-way, and everyone unarmed; we both agreed not to fire until the other did, thereby creating a complete deadlock and armistice (if strictly observed). Meanwhile Scots and Huns were fraternizing in the

most genuine possible manner. Every sort of souvenir was exchanged, addresses given and received, photos of families shown, etc. One of our fellows offered a German a cigarette; the German said, 'Virginian?' Our fellow said, 'Aye, straight-cut', the German said, 'No thanks, I only smoke Turkish!' It gave us all a good laugh. A German N.C.O. with the Iron Cross, gained, he told me, for conspicuous skill in sniping, started his fellows off on some marching tune. When they had done we sang '*The Boys of Bonnie Scotland, where the heather and the bluebells grow*', we went on to sing '*Good King Wenceslaus*' and ended up with '*Auld Lang Syne*', which we all, English, Scots, Irish, Prussians Wurtembergers, etc., joined in. It was absolutely astounding, if I had seen it on a cinematograph film I should have sworn that it was faked!

*Just after we had finished 'Auld Lang Syne' an old hare jumped up, and seeing so many of us about in an unwonted spot did not know which way to go. I gave one loud Holloa', and British and Germans, all gave chase, slipping up on the frozen plough, falling about, we killed in the open, German and one of our fellows falling together heavily upon the completely baffled hare. Shortly afterwards we saw four more hares, and killed one again; both were good heavy weight and he was well-fed on the cabbage patches, many untouched in no-man's land. The enemy kept one and we kept the other. Our Adjutant went in the morning to see if he could come to an agreement about our dead, lying out between the trenches. The trenches are very close at this point. He found a German officer, who arranged to bring all our dead to the half-way line. We took them and buried 29 exactly half-way between the two lines. Giles collected all personal effects, pay-books and identity discs, but was stopped by the Germans when he told some men to bring in the rifles. They did all they could for our wounded. This officer kept on pointing to our dead and saying, 'Les Braves, c'est bien dommage.'* George went down to that section and gave the officer a scarf. That evening a German orderly came to the half-way line, and brought a pair warm woolly glove as a present in return for George. I told them that the truce was at an end. We had sent them over some plum-puddings, and they thanked us heartily for them and retired again,

*The respective high commands banned further Yuletide fraternizations. Scenes like these did break out, nonetheless.*

*This happened due to the opponents being both Christian countries. Could this happen today?  
Don Bearcroft.*