

CHRONICLE



Issue 18 Spring 2018

DINING

Historical Association, Swansea Branch

Promoting History in South West Wales

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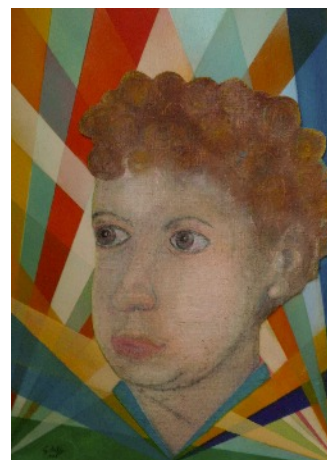
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Giotto



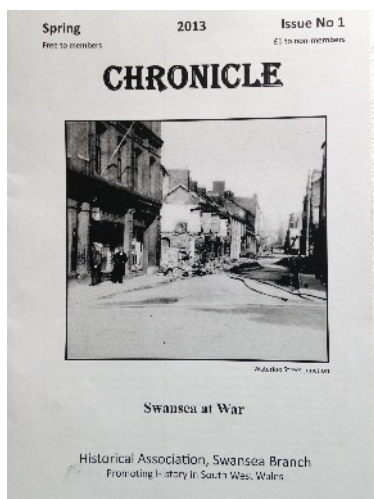
From a chapel window
in New York



Dylan by Gianpero Actis

Cover : Still Life with Lobster by Abraham Van Beyeren . Died 1690

From the Editor



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Much to my surprise, I've calculated, that during my lifetime, I've eaten over 87,000 meals and drunk, goodness knows how many, teas and coffees. So which of these many meals do I remember most? Some were delicious, some uneatable, some were in palatial surroundings, many were eaten sitting on beaches with sandwiches and cakes full of sand. Frugal, healthy meals were eaten during the wartime when food was rationed and being in London, with no nearby farms, eggs were limited to one a week.

In the 60s, driving through France in a severe heat wave, in a car with no air conditioning, we stopped in a small hamlet in the middle of nowhere. That night I ate my first real French meal, course after course of delicious country dishes; all cooked by the owner of the guest house, in a small kitchen. Some of my most memorable meals were also eaten in France. I was an au pair in Paris and ate with the family. One delicious course I ate at dinner was a plate of something, whipped smooth, white and creamy. 'What is this, Madame? It's delicious.' I said in my best French. She looked at me oddly and replied 'le mashed potato.'

Her husband was a famous mountaineer and on Sundays we ate out in restaurants in Paris that were invariably situated on the top floor. 'Please take the table out and set it up on the roof for us', he would say to the maitre d'. The table cloth was battened down, the wind blew. The roof tops and chimneys of Paris will stay long in my memory.

I chose 'Dining' as a subject for this issue as it covered many periods of history from the cave men onwards. No one has sent in an article about prehistoric dining but Dr John Law has delved into biblical times, Professor Prescott has taken us into the Victorian era as has John Ashley who tells of poverty and hunger suffered by the peasants. A friend of mine, during the recent snowy period in March, told of his agony on finding that nowhere in Swansea could he buy potatoes. Ian Smith and Peter Read have told of more recent times when food was more abundant even if meals were not so healthy.

Trevor Fishlock may not have eaten 87,000 meals but he certainly has eaten some amazing meals as he travelled around the world as a reporter.

After five years of editing 18 issues of Chronicle, I thought it best to let someone else become the Editor. New ideas and lay outs could be introduced by someone with a fresh outlook. Luckily, Stephanie Brown has volunteered to take over from me. She is a student at Cambridge and already operates our blogs, Facebook page and Twitter accounts with great success. I wish her all the best and hope she will get as much pleasure as I have from producing Chronicle and becoming involved with so many contributors. I would like to thank all who have written for these pages and, of course, all those who have read them. And of course, my husband Robert, who punctiliously checks my punctuation.

Giotto's interpretation of the Marriage at Cana in the Scrovegni Chapel, Padua

Enrico Scrovegni was one of the richest men in his native city of Padua

and more widely in north-east Italy. He was a 'money man', a banker who also drew on wealth from other sources, trade and property. His wealth had also been inherited from his father, Rinaldo, but the son was concerned that he had inherited something else, the taint of usury, of lending money at interest.

Usury, at least when it was practised aggressively, was regarded as a sin in medieval Europe, and for that Rinaldo's soul would have been perceived as destined to Hell. That is certainly where the poet Dante Alighieri (1265-1321) placed him in the seventh circle of the first canto of *The Inferno* in his *Divine Comedy*. It is possible that Dante knew Enrico. From 1300, the poet had been exiled from Florence, and spent most of his time in northern Italy. His bitterness at his treatment insured that Rinaldo was the only non-Florentine among the usurers in Hell. Whatever, the perceived sin of usury was much preached against and the wealth of the Scrovegni well known. It was almost certainly for this reason that Enrico decided to take precautionary measures. To celebrate his wealth he built or rebuilt a palace within the ruins of a Roman arena in the north-east of Padua close to the road and river routes to the commercial and financial emporium of Venice. To seek forgiveness for his on-going sins in the opening decade of the fourteenth century he built a chapel dedicated to the most powerful intercessor there was, the Virgin Mary.

The chapel itself was relatively modest in architectural terms, as was common in northern Italy at the time, its overall design reflecting a combination of rather muted Romanesque and Gothic influences. Brick was the principal building material. A timber roof covered its single nave. However, Enrico's priorities were clearly signalled by the artists he employed. One of the leading sculptors of the day, Giovanni Pisano (1250- 1315), was engaged to construct and sculpt the high altar, probably incorporating a likeness of the donor. Pisano was probably also commissioned to prepare Enrico's tomb monument.





For the rest, the ‘decoration’ was assigned to the leading painter of the day, Giotto. He and his large workshop were commissioned around 1305 to cover the walls in fresco – a water-based paint applied to still-damp fresh plaster. Such a technique allowed large areas to be covered relatively quickly and cheaply. The barrel roof was painted in blue with gold stars, representing Heaven. The east end is dominated by the Annunciation while the west, the entrance wall, has a representation of the Last Judgement, including within it, a depiction of Enrico on the side of the Saved, presenting, with the help of a monk, his chapel to the Archangel Gabriel and the Virgin of both Virgin of Charity and the Virgin of the Annunciation. (1) This reflected the Virgin’s role as an intercession in the afterlife.

The side walls of the chapel depicted scenes from the lives of the Virgin and Christ as generally understood in the medieval west. To convey a sense of magnificence and to suggest that the chapel was larger than it actually was, Giotto and his workshop placed each scene in a fictive framework of different coloured marbles. These were further enhanced with representations of prophets and the Virtues and Vices in *grisaille* to give the impression of sculptures carved from a grey stone. This is the setting for the scene from

the Life of Christ discussed here, *The Marriage at Cana*.

The story comes only from John 1: 1-12. Christ and his Mother are invited to a marriage at Cana in Galilee. Mary draws Her Son’s attention to the fact that the wine has run out. In none of the English versions of the event consulted does Christ appear to take the hint and he replies loftily that the time has not yet come for him, or them, to intervene. But, the narrative implies that Mary insists and eventually Christ accedes to his Mother’s request and commands the servants of the house to fill stone jars with water (2). This is then converted to a considerable quantity of fine wine much to the surprise of the steward of the feast, used to serving the better wine early.

Though John’s is the only Gospel to recount the episode, this has not prevented - indeed it has encouraged - a considerable degree of exegesis of varying degrees of credibility, ingenuity and invention. However, the scene’s place in the Scrovegni narrative is fairly clear; it underlines the role of the Virgin in ‘launching’ Christ’s mission and the miracle transformation of water to wine which prefigures the miracle promised by Christ at another meal, the Last Supper.

Giotto's reading of the scene is relatively close to the text and fairly easily followed even if the identity of the third haloed figure, with grey hair and a grey beard to Christ's left is unclear - one of the disciples perhaps? The other figures may be the bridal couple and witnesses to the event. Modern interpreters may want to see the central, imposing, female - if un-haloed - figure to the Virgin's right (the side of Honour) as Mary Magdalene.



But when it comes to Giotto's great and innovatory skill as a painter there can be no doubt. The arrangement of the room's architecture and the hangings behind the seated guests give a sense of depth to the fresco, as do the placing of 'the high' table, and the objects on it along with the smaller table on which the water/wine vessels are set. These jars are represented in great detail and very much 'in the round', as are all the major and lesser figures. A sense of depth and action is also conveyed by the servants at the feast one viewed from the side, one from behind, one half turned. The miracle itself is well captured with the gesture of Christ's hand 'triggering' a look of astonishment on the face of the steward, whose obvious girth, mirroring the jars, once again gives a sense of character to the narrative, as does the appearance at his elbow of an assistant possibly confirming the news.

Giotto's reputation and career continued to develop after his work in Padua, and his achievements were recognised by his compatriot Dante if once again their meetings remain a matter of conjecture; there is very little resemblance between the visions of the Last Judgement found in the chapel and the *Comedy*.

In some respects, Enrico was not so fortunate. Political change in Padua drove him into exile to Venice (1318) where he died (1336). His property was seized and his tomb monument was realized by a lesser artist only after his death. Even Giotto, even the whole Arena chapel site, suffered. Changes in artistic style moved 'taste' on from the early 1300s. Enrico's palace was demolished in the later eighteenth century. However, in considerable part due to British travellers and connoisseurs in Italy in the nineteenth century, and a growing enthusiasm for the art of the Middle Ages and early Renaissance, the achievements of Giotto and his patron were rediscovered. Giotto's frescoes were reproduced in woodcut form for the influential Arundel Society in the 1850s - carrying a commentary by John Ruskin for the Great Exhibition, and the commune of Padua was prompted to declare the chapel a public monument and to commission works of restoration, which are on-going.

They may not make the cultural cut in the new *Civilisations* series, but Giotto's frescoes in the Arena chapel are widely regarded by the more informed, if less telegenic, as a major contribution to the history of western art. For the visitor today, booking to see them is necessary. Let us hope that Enrico's investment shortened his place in another queue.



Last Judgment by Giotto, fresco 1306.

John Law

And finally.....

As a past Chairman and the present President of the Swansea Branch of the Historical Association, I am taking this opportunity to mark what is going to be the last issue of *The Chronicle* under the stewardship of the current editor, Margaret McCloy, and to express my admiration and appreciation of her in this role.

I feel strongly that one of the Branch's best decisions (taken off-committee, when denied the heady delights of 'Apologies for absence' and 'AOB'...) was when some members gathered in the conveniently situated Pump House in December 2012. There was a lively discussion as to how the Branch's profile could be raised and its activities advertised with the publication of a regular newsletter/journal combining a mix of short articles alongside some news items. All present were enthusiastically in favour, 'Chronicle' became the chosen title and after formal approval *Chronicle* was born.

But who to edit? Margaret McCloy raised her hand tentatively and her offer to help was unanimously and gratefully accepted, with an immediate promotion to editor. She has since guided the *Chronicle* through eighteen issues over five years. It first appeared in black and white in the spring of 2013, growing in size and moving to colour in 2014. Most issues have been themed, but they have also included a wide range of material.

The reason for Margaret's success as editor quickly became apparent. She has the ability to identify contributions from within the Branch membership and from interesting informed 'outsiders'. Free to members (some of whom were even paid up!), the *Chronicle* is available at meetings and other events, is presented to institutions like the National Library and placed on-line by the Historical Association itself.

It is obvious that *Chronicle* has more than realised the aims and aspirations of the Branch, and throughout Margaret has demonstrated an effective combination of intuition, insistence and charm, and by doing so has raised the profile of the branch considerably.



Contributors were not paid but they, and others, could be rewarded, generously, 'at home', by the McCloy's. The journal itself, of course, costs the Branch, if early on Margaret did have considerable success – largely unsupported - in raising sympathetic sponsorship. However, we are fortunate that due to the success of its other ventures, and the size of its membership, the Branch can afford the outlay, and speaking to members I am aware that for many, it is one of the major perks of membership. This issue is sadly, but perhaps understandably - considering the time and effort involved in its publication - Margaret's last. On behalf of the committee, the membership – and a wider public - I would like to thank her for her sterling efforts whilst wishing Stephanie Brown, her successor, in the role of editor, all the very best.

John Law

Many thanks to Swansea University and the University of Wales TSD who have helped with the printing of Chronicle.



Stinging Nettle Soup

The foreign editor of The Times offered me adventure: 'We'd like you to do India for us,' he said. I winged to Delhi and wrote beneath the hammer of the monsoon. With a small bag and typewriter I took dawn flights to seek stories in India's vastness.

The typewriter led the way. I telexed my words and sought stories on a plate in interesting restaurants. I zigged from the Himalayas to Cape Comorin, and zagged to Pakistan, Nepal, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka and Burma. I absorbed history and culinary culture, stories of meat, fish, plants, rice, peppers, breads, dosas and idlis. In the shade of palms I wrote a history of coconuts and a saga of monsoon mangoes.

Last Christmas Day, my wife and I renewed old times. Kuldip Nayar was an early friend when I started my India stint in 1980. At 93 he is still writing. For Christmas lunch he and his wife served us a noble Punjabi curry.

I grew up in the ration book years, before chickens were invented.

My favourite school lunch was corned beef hash. As a junior reporter in Portsmouth I embraced the new tide of Indian and Chinese food. Reporting the launching of new ships in Cowes I learned to eat lobsters and sip champagne. Working part-time for a glossy magazine I listened spellbound to John Arlott's supper tales of wine and cricket.

When I joined The Times the charming Daphne du Maurier gave me tea and a story on her Cornish terrace.

I set off to learn Wales. I'd seen neither Cardiff nor colliery until The Times sent me. I walked mountains and the underground world of brave colliery men.

I discovered laverbread and the famous stinging nettle soup of Amabel and Clough Williams-Ellis.

Eight months of travel and study in the USA taught me to eat and speak American. I saw a Texas cowpoke kill a rattlesnake. More cowpokes cooked delicious tender meatballs on a hot shovel.

Reporting war in Afghanistan an American reporter and I walked for three days over Khyber mountains with 30 Pathan warriors. We ate little, some bread, beans and rice, green tea and an egg. The Pathans schooled us to conceal ourselves beneath our brown blankets when gunships flew overhead. We walked three days back to the Khyber guided by a genial opium smuggler.

For three years I was The Times's New York correspondent. A trencherman American colleague said: 'Tonight, we eat at the top pizza joint in town.' The moment we sat at the table he ordered a large pizza. This was to fill the hungry gap while we perused the menu to choose a king pizza apiece.

The job took me all over the United States, Canada, the Caribbean, Mexico, South America and the High Arctic, where I lunched on narwhal blubber. I travelled in Europe, Africa, China, Japan, Vietnam, Papua New Guinea and Australia where I enjoyed Doyle's fish restaurant in Sydney.



I lived in Moscow as The Daily Telegraph correspondent in the Gorbachev era. I wrote from Samarkand and Leningrad, the Baltic countries, Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia. In Tbilisi a friend invited me and some colleagues to dinner. The first courses were garlic-soaked spinach and lamb kebabs; then we walked to the home of a scientist for caviar, cheese, grape and walnut sausage, cheesecake and rose petals in syrup to promote sweet dreams.

In Yakutsk, in a Siberian winter, I and my guide Nadia met a pair of newly-weds. They invited us to their wedding party. There were 100 at the feast, plentiful vodka and tables piled with mares' blood sausages. Nadia whispered: 'Stand up and speak.' I uttered some phrases in my halting Russian. She said: 'They want you to speak English to bring them luck.' 'But no one here speaks English,' I said. 'True,' she said, 'but they want to hear you anyway.'

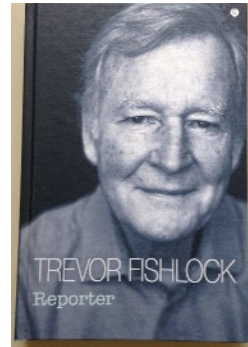
I rose to my feet, toasted the bride and groom ornately to thunderous applause. Nadia said: 'They will remember you forever, the Englishman who blessed their wedding.'

Reading Trevor Fishlock's latest book, *Reporter*,

I was reminded of a line from one of Rudyard Kipling's great poems.

"If you can talk with crowds and keep your virtue,
Or walk with Kings-nor lose the common touch
...you'll be a man my son".

Trevor Fishlock is a man and reporter who is equally at home interviewing the Dai lama, an ex-officer of MI5 or talking to a 'Sikh with a striped cravat. The descriptions of places, sights, sounds and people, tumble from the pages in a way that you feel you can almost see and smell them.



During a stormy 51-day voyage in a yacht, across the Southern Ocean, from Cape Town to Melbourne, we stopped for a night at remote Kerguelen island. The French scientists there gave us a fine dinner and we left with armfuls of fresh bread. One of my six shipmates said a waitress also treated him to a glass of wine and a kiss.

I kayaked for a few days on the US-Canadian border, through a maze of islands. The guide served the same meal every night: campfire steak and whisky. Before we retired to our tents we hauled the food up a pine tree in a sack, beyond the reach of bears. The guide said they might nose around, but generally they steered away from folks.

I met Mary in Alaska. She invited me to her log house for dinner, to tell me about her dogs, how much she loved to race them through the snow. 'Can you howl?' she asked. I said I'd try. The dogs were in their quarters. We raised our faces and howled a wolfish song. The dogs howled back. Alaska is full of surprises. How often have you howled a lullaby to a team of sled dogs?

Trevor Fishlock

Above all, there is a truth running through the book, which makes you trust the writer and his words, uncommon now for a profession which is sometimes viewed with a scepticism normally reserved for bankers and politicians. Reporting was a destiny for the young man from Hayling Island, who answered an advert in his local paper for a reporter. As a correspondent, he lived in over 70 countries including India, Russia, the USA, Africa and the Arctic. He led a life, that became full of unpredictable experiences and excitement, now being shared with his readers.

Ann Carter

Dining with Dylan



The problem trying to highlight the dining habits of Dylan Thomas is that drink was rarely an accompaniment to the final course, discreetly consumed in beautiful wine glasses.

It often constituted the main ingredient in all three courses or at times the only component. Malcolm Brinnin who organised his trips to America, realised this when the Welsh poet touched down in Islewood Airport for his first lecture tour of the States. Writing about Dylan in America, he tells us that once collected from the plane, he took him for ‘his favourite breakfast of double scotch and soda.’

Edith Sitwell who at first was a critic of Dylan’s writing, became a champion of his work and a good friend to him. At one of their meals she told him he should look for a proper job that paid. Writing to her later, he told her, ‘...to take a regular job is the most sensible suggestion in the world. I would willingly and gladly, but have, apart from the little writing, reviewing, hack journalism and odd jobbery I’ve done, hardly any qualifications.’ As well as being famous for his drinking habits, Dylan became notorious for his grovelling letters to people he had let down. In one such letter he combines both elements, when he explains to the Arts Administrator Eric Walter White why he failed to turn up for their planned meeting. ‘Edith’s party was very sedate and had more dukes than drinks.’

Yes, it was rather risky fixing an appointment immediately after a party.’

Literature has its fair share of meals that go wrong. In novels and plays, the characters gathered around a table for a convivial meal, is an excellent opportunity for the writer to make everything implode. It is often the time when friends become protagonists and share their hidden resentments. Dylan had such a meal in his house at Laugharne.

Caitlin had intercepted love letters to her husband from Pearl Kazan, whom he met in America. She had earlier grilled Brinnin with questions. What was she like, what did Dylan see in her? According to his own version of events Dylan accidentally flicked a match box at his wife. It hit her on the shoulder. She picked up the box, hurled it at Dylan’s face, stood up and walked over to his chair, pulled him out by his hair and pushed him to the ground. She then started beating him by banging his head on the floor. Eventually Dylan freed himself from Caitlin’s grip and ran up the stairs. Brinnin takes up the story; ‘In a moment, Caitlin came back to the dining room and, towering over us, her eyes flashing, her face steely, said, ‘Thank you for



A tin of peaches for the Mayor of Swansea's wife

Caitlin boiled a chicken without removing the heathers.

At the heart of one of Dylan's most popular short stories is a dessert which goes slightly awry. The Peaches is a wonderful story of Auntie Annie's agonising preparations for a special tea for Mrs Williams the Mayor of Swansea's wife. The large and rather foreboding lady arrives at the farm in Fern Hill to deposit her son Jack who is to stay a few nights with the young Dylan. Auntie Annie smartens herself up for Mrs Williams who arrives in a chauffeur driven limousine. Annie has put on a dress but forgotten that underneath her hem are mud splattered and dung smeared wellingtons. Gwilwm, her son, expresses concerns about the freshness of the fruit that is to be served as it has been in the cupboard since before Christmas.. When the tin of fruit is eventually opened and some of it

deposited in Mrs Williams' bowl, Auntie Annie is deflated

when told in no uncertain terms that the Lady Mayoress detests peaches.

Dylan was to endure some strange cooking throughout his life. On one occasion Caitlin boiled a chicken without removing the feathers. Barely cooked, the guests had to hack their through the foul fowl. When on tour in America he was invited for a meal with Shelley Winters the actor. It was only after eating the meal that he discovered the lettuce had been washed by Shelley's friend Marilyn with the use of a brillo pad. With a history of such culinary and social disasters perhaps it is little wonder that he preferred to be 'Giddy agog from the slurred bibble babble, over cocktails strong enough to snap one's braces.

Peter Read

Contributors

John Ashley

Writer, Lecturer, Walker

and Photographer

Trevor Fishlock

TV Presenter, Reporter,

Sailor and Author

Dr John Law

Former Reader in dept of History,
in Swansea University.

Professor Andrew Prescott

Head of Digital Humanities at Kings College
London

Peter Read

Actor, Playwright, Poet and Teacher

Ian Smith

Curator of Modern Industry at the National
Waterfront Museum, Swansea.



Carbs with Everything

In our house, in the 1950s, food was everything. We lived a big rented house in the Hafod in Swansea. The house was shared by many family members, Mam and Dad, Gramps and Nanna, two great aunts and two cousins.

They were just recovering from the war with all its food shortages and rationing. Indeed, rationing only finished completely in 1954, the year before I was born. As a very young child I can remember them making me a cup of tea with three heaped teaspoons of sugar. Butter was spread so thickly on toast or bread that it was almost like eating cheese. The deprivations of the early 1940s had created a nation of post-war gluttons. Just because they could.

All of our family referred to meals as breakfast, dinner and tea, but not my dad. Six years in the RAF meant that he had breakfast, lunch and tiffin. He was teased mercilessly over this by all the family and even some neighbours.

In those days people had proper lunch breaks. School lunch time was from 12.00 to 1.30 and my father came home for lunch from the gasworks for the same time. This meant that we sat around a table at lunchtime and at teatime. We all had food together, or at least six at a time as there was only room for six around our table!



Our daily menu was repeated on a weekly basis, so much so that I can still remember each day's line-up. Monday was bacon, egg and chips. Wednesday was chops and gravy dinner. Thursday was liver and onions. Friday bacon, egg and chips again. Saturday was cockles and laverbread and Sunday would be a roast dinner, either beef or chicken. On Saturdays, a lady would bring cockles and laverbread from Penclawdd, in North Gower to sell around the streets in Hafod. My nanna would fry the cockles in breadcrumbs and bacon fat, fry the laverbread and serve it all with a mountain of boiled potatoes and bread and butter.



Laverbread isn't bread at all. It is made from boiled seaweed sometimes rolled in oats and is a Welsh delicacy. By the time it is cooked down it is a very dark green almost black in colour. Mrs Douglas, a Geordie acquaintance, when she first saw it in a shop window, remarked to her daughter

'My goodness! They sell cow-pats in the shops down here!'

Dinner was always served with many slices of bread and thick butter and potatoes played a big part in our diets too. My father, gramps and teenage cousin all seemed to have about ten potatoes each on their plate! We certainly packed the carbs in every meal. Lard played a big part in our diets.

This was in a time before supermarkets and every neighbourhood had local butchers and grocers.

As a child, I would be sent with a note to pick up various parcels of food wrapped in paper and sometimes tied with string. I was fascinated by the bacon slicer in John's grocery shop. I loved watching him slice things. Corned beef, cooked meat, bacon, cheese and bread (this was before sliced bread). Looking back now I realise that everything was sliced on the same machine. Raw meat, cooked meat, cheese and bread, and even once a bit of his finger got in there! There were no refrigerated counters, just a marble slab to keep products cool, and of course there were no 'sell-by' dates back then. I think

we must have become immune to the various bugs.

Just a bit further on from John's was the butchers. Gwen and Mabel ran the butchers. A trip to the shops with my grandmother could take quite a while even though they were only fifty yards away! Everyone stayed and talked for hours! Long after we'd been served they'd still be yapping about all and sundry! The butchers shop was another great place to go where I could see bits of cow, sheep and pig being cut up. Gwen would often show me something of interest – like an eyeball or tongue. If I was a good boy they would give me a raw sausage to eat, which lots of kids did. We'd bite the end off and suck out all the meat! It's no wonder really that as an adult I'm vegetarian.



Ready-made food was a real treat. We had a lovely chip shop near to our house where we children would get a rissolle and chips for 6d .

The rissoles were corned beef and potato mash coated in breadcrumbs and deep fried.

A more up-market takeaway was from the 'Faggots and Peas' shop in High Street. Mam and Dad might arrive home on a Saturday evening with two jugs, one of faggots in gravy and one full of mushy peas. I still love mushy peas.



On a Sunday evening in the summertime I would be sent to 'Angelo's Café' (next to Gwen's the butcher) with a big glass jug. Angelo would fill the jug with scoops of ice cream and when I returned home Mam would make 'floaters' in glasses of milk for everyone.

When I compare our eating habits of those days to the variety dishes that we eat now, how things have changed so much. I'm reminded of one night at a family party in the 1970s where one of my aunties had made a buffet for the guests.



There was a curry and rice (very, very mild) and slices of pizza. My mother, in her 50s by now, took one look and said

'Well I'm not eating any of that foreign muck!'

Life- as I found it-and have lived it-and am leaving it.

When it is considered - When - Where - and to Whom I was born, I do not know that my Life has been anything out of the ordinary. On one hand, I have not been a dud - or what may be called a wash-out or a Fool. On the other I have not been a shining success - and certainly not a Sharper. I have - as it were - stuck where I was planted. That being so, Why then should I write any description of my Life? I confess there's no reason - or but little reason.

But looking back over the past 70 years or so I think the changes that have taken place is and will be almost unbelievable by those who are to come; and I am writing this thinking it may possibly be read by some Grandchild of mine; my own children have in the main heard the story - or most of it - from my own lips.

By the age of ten John Russell was helping with the harvest.

I have always had a pretty clear remembrance of this Summers work, and I have often said - and I believe it true - that many days that Summer, I drank more than a gallon of strong Cider, and here let me explain the routine, Half past 5 in the morning, out of bed, dress and downstairs, put on our boots, splash a drop of water to our face, take our bag containing our days food, each knew their own, a little bit of bread would be put on each bag called the mornings bit, to eat as we went on, and so, away to the Farm, nearly a Mile to be there by 6. About that time the servant girl would unlock the cellar door and proceed to fill the flagons, or firkins as we used to call them, the boys would get a quart, the

men 2 quart. The master would appear and give orders, and then he would go to the stable at the top of the yard to give the Carters orders. More often than not he would be dodged, and 1 or 2 of these firkins of cider would be handed round and emptied, and the girl would refill, but when the most cider was drank was in the hay and corn harvest when it was hot weather. There was no stint of it, have whatever you wanted, and it was nothing but cider to drink. We scarcely ever tasted Tea except when we got home at night, 9 or 10 o'clock if we were hauling, and so we got used to it and could drink a lot of it.

John Russell and his wife - who is not named in the memoir - had thirteen children, eleven living to adulthood. By 1896 John was making his living as a carter and horse handler.

I have been writing rather a lot about my work, and now I propose to write a bit about my home. What my life was there, and I would ask any who may read this to read carefully, weigh it, think of it, and having done that Judge me and my Wife whether we ever knew what it was to struggle for a living. Of the time that I have wrote of yet, we had 7 children (living). It can be seen that our 8th child was born in May 1896, the 9th born, but the first born died. I have said that my wages was 13 shillings per week. There were 8 children, the oldest a little over 12 years when the 8th living child was born, and was therefore not out of School. School leaving age was then 13, provided they had passed a certain standard. Well 8 children, I and my wife made 10 to live out of 13 shillings per week. How was it spent? 14

I kept one shilling to myself in a sick benefit club, keep myself in clothes etc as far as I could. 1 shilling per week went for 1lb of butter, that was all the year around price. 1d per day (7d per week) for milk, leaving 10 shillings and 5 pence to provide, meat and bacon, groceries, soap and soda etc. Boots and clothes for 10 people, and here let me point out that 5 or 6 of these children were going to Winsham school, a distance of quite 2 miles, through muddy gateways and muddy lanes (that is) in Winter and wet weather. Thus 5 or 6 little dinners had to be got ready for them, besides their breakfast to start them off for School shortly after 8 o'clock each morning.

Days for the agricultural worker and his family were long.

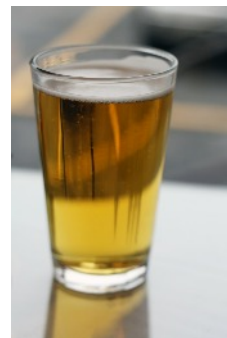
Well, I have told about my wages, and my family, and now let me try to show what my home was like and what my life was like there. No reader will judge it to be a home of luxury, it was not. Neither was it a den of misery. I would leave about 5 in the morning (perhaps a little later in the very dark winter mornings) taking my days allowance of food with me, for my Wife would put that ready overnight, with a bottle of tea for drink, and as a rule I would get home sometime after 7 in the evening. Let me point out that where I lived, Whitdown, was half a mile or more from the stable, and like climbing a mountain to get up to it.

Otherwise, I should often be going home for dinner, but my work (cartering) was all walking, so I didn't want a walk for exercise, and generally, I had to carry home with me 2 cans of water for there was no drinking water supply.

When I got home at night of course I had a hot meal, vegetables with a little bit of bacon or some sort of meat. Generally speaking I had food enough, and I think the children did, but the quality was not what it should have been. Nevertheless the children were healthy and happy. They knew nothing better nor looked for anything better.

Now what of my Wife. I cannot give so minute an account of how she spent her time, but I don't think it wants any explanation. One thing I know, she was never idle. Every night she would be sewing and patching or making up some garment for one or the other of them. Often the tears would run down her cheeks when she came to some garment and find it was absolutely gone beyond repair.

Perhaps the most outstanding night was Saturdays. As a rule I after finishing with firewood, barbering (if any to do), selfish, perhaps, would go to Windwhistle pub for a pint of cider and a chat,



but it would be very rare thing for me to spend more than 3d, good cider could be bought then for 1½d per pint. I would get away there often to get away from the bathing business, getting home generally about 20 past 10 to find my wife cleaning boots and with a lot of socks and stocking drying by the fire. After the boot cleaning, these socks and stockings would have to be gone through, darned and mended.



A neighbour asked John Russell how he could possibly manage such a large family on so little income.

But, said Mr. Miller, one thing your wife is healthy, she can do something to help. Well, yes, said I, she is nursemaid, housemaid, cook, laundress, tailoress and dressmaker, what she does with her spare time I don't know, but I will ask her when I get home.

John Russell wrote his memoir in 1936 in his 75th year, and added to it in 1942.

Two days ago I attended the funeral of my last sister Anna who was born in May 1850. How long before my time comes I know not. One thing I can say I have much to be thankful for, though crippled with Rheumatic I enjoy good bodily health and live comfortably in my humble way and though it was a struggle to bring

up my family I say again, they are not too many now, each and every one of them would do whatever is in their power to do for my comfort, and so I leave this writing for some eyes to see when mine are closed.

J. Russell, 20-2-42
Died 12.8.46

John Russell was born in Cudworth, Somerset, in 1861, the tenth of a family of thirteen. Throughout his life he worked on the land as had his father and grandfather before him.

In the last decade of his life John Russell wrote his memoir. He talked about all aspects of life on the land. These extracts on food and providing for his family are reproduced by kind permission of Lesley Williams, editor of *The Bay* magazine and great-granddaughter of John Russell.

John Ashley

Swansea Masonic Feasts at Beaufort Lodge



Duke of Montagu painted by Godfrey Kneller

Freemasonry as a social club began in Scotland in the sixteenth century,

but took off as a fashionable pursuit after the appointment of the Duke of Montagu as the Grand Master of a newly formed Grand Lodge in London in 1721. Many noblemen, professional men, tradesmen and artisans became Freemasons and within a short time dozens of lodges were formed in Britain. As Freemasonry spread to Europe, it helped spread new scientific and cultural ideas, and became an important engine of the Enlightenment.

Masonic lodges in England and Wales in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries frequently met in local taverns, and masonic meetings generally ended with a grand feast. The records of these meals in masonic archives provide fascinating insights into the history of dining. For example, the masonic weekly newspaper *The Freemason* published on 26 January 1876 a 'Shakespearian menu' used by the Wentworth Lodge No. 1239 in Sheffield.

The menu was garlanded with appropriate Shakespearian quotes such as 'Here is Everything Advantageous to Life' (*The Tempest*), 'I Could Wish My Best Friend at Such a Feast' (*Timon of Athens*), and 'Labour Shall Refresh Itself' (*Henry V*).

However, for the modern reader, it is less the Shakespearian quotations in the Wentworth Lodge menu that catches the eye than the opulence of the food. The lodge's bill of fare began with a choice of clear gravy or Palestine Soup (made with Jerusalem artichokes, and perhaps appropriate because a number of masonic lodges had recently supported the excavations by the freemason Sir Charles Warren at the Temple Mount in Jerusalem). This was followed by a fish course comprising choices of turbot and egg sauce, cod and oyster sauce, and fried sole. The entrees were stewed kidneys and mutton cutlets in tomato sauce. These were followed by removes consisting of saddles of mutton, turkeys, geese, chickens, ham and tongue. The game course comprised pheasants, wild ducks or grouse.

The sweet courses enjoyed by the Wentworth lodge were no less epic in scale. The 'entremets' offered consisted of plum puddings, mince pies, jellies and creams. These were followed by macaroni cheese and cheshire cheese, and finished off with a dessert course of biscuits, grapes, oranges, pears, apples, filberts, raisins, almonds and coffee. 'Use every man after his desert', reminded the menu from *Hamlet*. The Wentworth lodge's menu certainly met the injunction of *Hamlet* printed in the menu 'Fail not the feast'.

As the lodge happily digested this stupendous meal, the lodge drank twelve toasts, beginning with the Prince of Wales as Grand Master and proceeding through the hierarchy of princial and local masonic officers.



Inside Freemasons Hall, Queen Street, Roll of Honour by Phillip Medhurst 1939

The archives of masonic lodges, which can be readily explored at the magnificent Library and Museum of Freemasonry at Freemasons' Hall in Great Queen Street in London, are a rich source for studying the history of dining and food. The importance of food and dining in Freemasonry is illustrated by the stories of the Beaufort Lodges in Swansea, which can be traced in the historical correspondence and lodge returns at the Library and Museum of Freemasonry.

The Beaufort Lodge was established in Swansea in 1769. It got off to a bad start. Some of those who had signed the petition for the lodge were not regular masons, and the Deputy Provincial

Grand Master had to travel over from Carmarthen to rectify the situation. Then the Master embezzled the lodge funds, including money owed to Grand Lodge.

Then Gabriel Jeffreys took charge. Jeffreys was a lawyer who lived at Prospect Place. He was a member of the town council and afterwards served as portreeve, the equivalent of mayor. When a trust was set up to improve Swansea Harbour, Jeffreys became the clerk and quickly demonstrated great financial acumen. Jeffreys' first act in trying to rescue the Beaufort lodge was to try and get in the good books of Grand Lodge by sending three barrels of oysters to the Grand Secretary. He also sent a long list of equipment he wanted for the lodge. He was willing to use his own considerable financial resources to make the Swansea lodge the match of any in London.

In 1770, a visit to the Swansea lodge by freemasons was marked by an enormous feast and celebrations in the town. Sadly, we do not have the detailed menus of these feasts but the cost was over £64 (the equivalent of about £6,000 today). Prodigious amounts of alcohol were consumed, with the accounts listing gallons of punch, toddy, ale, porter, brandy, port, and wine. Musicians were brought in from Carmarthen and the arrival of the Cowbridge masons in the town was marked by the firing of guns and the ringing of the church bells.

Jeffreys's enormous ambitions for the lodge are shown by the purchase of opulent lodge furniture, including such exotic items as gilt pomegranites and a sword so huge that no box could be found to transport it. Jeffreys persuaded many local dignitaries to join the lodge, including members of the council and the local MP. He drew up plans for a masonic hall which he declared would compare with any in England. Jeffreys' motives appear to have been partly civic - he hoped that the provincial grand lodge would be moved from Carmarthen to Swansea - and partly personal - he wanted to be a provincial officer himself.

Then Jeffreys lost interest. The lodge rapidly declined and by 1800 was virtually defunct. The reasons why Jeffreys suddenly abandoned his promotion of freemasonry are unclear, but, given Jeffreys's extravagance, may have been financial. Subsequent attempts by George Bowen, a painter from London, to re-establish masonic activity in the town met with resistance from Jeffreys, but nevertheless led to the establishment of the Indefatigable Lodge No 237 at the Plume and Feathers in 1800 which has recently celebrated its two hundredth anniversary. The close association between freemasonry and food is evident from the fact that many of the members of the Indefatigable Lodge at the time of its two hundredth anniversary were traders in Swansea Market.



Andrew Prescott

Thank you to some of our past contributors:

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| Anita Acari | Professor Ralph Griffiths | Liz McSloy |
| Gwyneth Anthony | Jeffrey Griffiths | Geoff Mortimer |
| John Ashley | Gwyneth Grindrod | Ena Niedergang |
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HA Swansea Branch programme 2018



Talks on Saturdays at 11 am, The National Waterfront Museum, Ocean

19th May 2018

Speaker: Non Thomas

From Welsh Mam to Modern Woman



21st July 2018 *The Sid Kidwell Memorial Lecture*

Speaker: Bernard Lewis

Swansea in the Great War

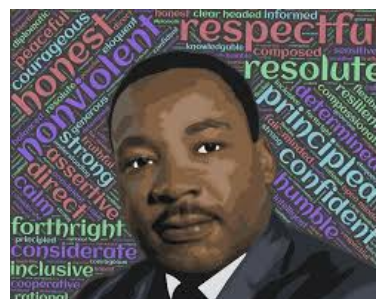


16th June 2018

Speaker: Dr Charlie Rozier

Writing History in Medieval

Durham, 995-1130



18th August 2018

Speaker: Dr Stephen McVeigh

Killing Dreams:

The 50th Anniversary of the assassination of Martin Luther King and Robert Kennedy



15th September 2018 *The President's Lecture*

Dr John Law

The Doge of Venice: Prince or Prisoner?