



Celebrating the Chartists

NEWSLETTER

Newport Regeneration

Chartist developments recommended

A task force commissioned last summer by the Welsh Government has called for the Chartist contribution to British democracy to be “fully recognised and developed” by the City of Newport.

In its report ‘**ReNEWPORT**’ published just before Christmas, the Newport Business Task Force recommends more than fifty, wide ranging, regeneration proposals. It wants to get going with the City Council on these ideas in 2014.

The report is rather a long ‘shopping list’, but to its credit, there is a serious attempt ‘to join the dots’. Education, culture and heritage are highlighted as vital ‘economic drivers’ for a City region that is envisaged as cyber linked, digitally ‘savvy’ and projecting a self- image inspired by past achievements. Newport urgently needs to intermesh its depressed city centre with the economically buoyant outer areas. The City Council is already ‘in the zone’ actively promoting superfast broadband and consulting on city centre redevelopment plans.

‘ReNEWPORT’ seeks to place the City at the centre of the story about the democratization of society in the United Kingdom with three specific developments:

- a museum of democracy,
- a multimedia public display
- and the creation of a major online

These skeletal’ ideas require ‘fleshing out’, further discussion – and money!

Speaking to the Civic Society (9th January), Simon Gibson, author of the report, did not rule out compulsory purchase powers. This needs to be done immediately if the ‘Chartist Hub’ - the Westgate Hotel and surrounding buildings – are to be saved.

The Chartist Anniversary Committee wants to get actively involved in this process. Committee members are delighted that the task force wishes to promote the Chartist Story. Michael Sheen has expressed his support for Chartist recognition and a Chartist Commission is about to be set up with the Council’s backing.

The Committee Chairperson, Pat Drewett says: “We recognise that the City Council is positive about the desire to commemorate Chartism and would really like to work with the City Council and others interested in finding ways to ensure that our Chartist heritage is promoted for the economic benefit of the city.”

‘ReNEWPORT’ are right – let’s get started in 2014 – the 175th anniversary of the south Wales Chartist Rising 1839. Let’s all join in the exciting celebration programme that is developing across the south east of Wales and throughout this anniversary year.



Chartists Remembered - for the 7th year running



A report from the pupils of Malpas Court Primary, Newport.

Children Chant for Chartists Cause!

The pupils from Miss Lewis', Mrs Harrington's and Mrs Webb's became Chartists for the afternoon on Tuesday 5th November and marched through Newport town centre to remember those people who gave their lives for us to have the right to vote in 1839.

There were 5 primary schools and 1 comprehensive school involved with the march. The march began at St Woolos cathedral and ended at the old Westgate hotel which was where the infamous chartist riot took place. At the Westgate hotel the children gathered together and lots of shoppers and spectators gathered to watch the scene.

The current Mayor of Newport Cliff Suller was at the Westgate Hotel to watch the children perform a poem in character as chartist people. The Mayor told Miss Lewis that "The pupils were fantastic and you should be very proud of them."

"This is the seventh time we have done it, the seventh group we have taken along. I hope it's bringing history to life for not only my pupils but the local primary schools as well." said James Boiling, History teacher from Monmouth School.

His group of sixth formers joined pupils from St Joseph, St Woolos, Clytha, Maindee, Malpas Court and Caerleon Endowed Primary Schools

The seventh annual re-enactment was organised this year by Newport Museum with funding from Communities First Programme (Welsh Assembly) and support from the Chartist Anniversary Committee.

Maria Williams in the Argus (26 January) observed that Newport City centre has a 'child shaped gap'.

We're sure she agrees - a 'BUMPER' Anniversary Year Children's march should be top of the list

NOVEMBER 2014 could be the CLIMAX to a campaign for NEWPORT to become a 'CHILD FRIENDLY' place.



Welsh Heritage Schools' Initiative- A call to all Teachers

ENTER the annual competition for schools' work on local and Welsh history and heritage organised by WHSI

This is for work undertaken from April 2013 to April 2014

A chance to do Chartist based projects, if you wish.

Great opportunity for schools to showcase achievements, and win prizes ranging from £1,500 to £100. Open to all schools in Wales For ADVICE contact Elin Jones: elinphillips3@btinternet.com

Info & application available www.whsi.org.uk

One Hundred And Seventy Five Years Ago



1 January 1839 - fine weather – several thousand men, women and children walked from all directions to John Llewellyn's beer house at Pontnewynydd. Capel Hanbury Leigh, Lord Lieutenant of the County, who lived at Pontypool House sent agents to take notes.

The landlord had set up election hustings outside his beer house. The purpose of the day was to elect a delegate to the forthcoming Convention in London. The crowd arrived expectantly – John Frost was there, but despite the promise of the placards neither Hugh Williams of Carmarthen nor the famous Feargus O'Connor appeared.

The meeting voted William Edwards, a Newport baker, to take the chair. He had promoted the meeting with Llewellyn and the Pontypool Chartists. He explained the six points and declared that many lives would be lost before the Charter was gained. He was willing to sacrifice his own. Edwards was no stranger to the valleys, where for some months he had been engaged in 'missionary work'. Previously a lay preacher, his speeches regularly mentioned sacrifice, suffering, loss of blood. The crowd liked his evangelist style.

Frost took his cue from Edwards and

relentlessly pursued his favourite target – extravagance in high places, paid for by heavy taxes on the goods purchased by the people. To great applause he lashed the £630,000 paid annually to the Privy Council. Sensing the mood, he turned on the Queen's income of £510,000 and the many additional payments she received such as £1000 paid to each of her grooms of the bedchamber - "twelve great strapping fellows about her Majesty's bed chamber. And what did they do for their money?" he asked. "If you heard of a gentleman wanting a groom, you knew he wanted someone to clean his horses," but he claimed he was at a loss to say what these chaps did for the Queen. He roused great mirth amongst his supporters, but also he had he had raised the serious prospect that his enemies would accuse him of bringing the monarchy into disrepute.

The surprise speaker was Henry Vincent, aged 25, a 'missionary' sent by the London Working Men's Association to organise branches in the West Country. Edwards had brought him over from Bristol for a three day tour (1st to 3rd January) to win the support of the Pontypool, Newport and Caerleon branches for Frost.

Vincent launched into a diatribe against the corruption of the 'drunkards, gamblers, money grinders and tyrants' sitting in Parliament. He asked "Would not the men of Wales assist those of London, Yorkshire, Lancashire and the West of England to get the Charter?" He seduced his audience into accepting that "The soldiers would not fire on them, for half of them were Chartists." The fatal myth was planted – with dire consequences later that year.

He continued "when the word 'now' was said in London the people would lay hands on its foundation, and the whole structure would totter and reel until down it would fall" - a call to action that could only be interpreted as an end to monarchy, which he described as "a pretty little bauble, the crown" at the top of corrupt government.

Vincent was a marked man. In the crowd was a spy, David Jones, present when Vincent spoke three months earlier at New Palace Yard, Westminster. Matters were reported to the Home Office. (Document ref: HO40/46)

PONTYPOOL in 1839



Horse Shoe Inn, Pontnewynydd Was this the beer house of John Llewelyn?

Pontypool is located where old east-west roads intersected the north-south valley. Its place name refers to a bridge built to cross a natural pool in the river. In 1839, the pool was still there, dammed to provide water power.

Pontypool Park with its great house dominated the sunnier eastern bank. Its master, Capel Hanbury Leigh had removed the old Park Forge, extending his private domain to both banks of the river.

The town was entirely on the western side, where two main streets meet at the 'Cross'. Traders had probably gathered there since medieval times. This was the commercial hub in 1839, a market place safely above the torrent of the Afon Lwyd.

Situated at the eastern edge of the south Wales coalfield, iron ore could be extracted from the sides of the mountains, processed by water power technology and smelted with charcoal produced from local timber.

From the 16th century, Pontypool developed under the direction of the Hanburys, as the Monmouthshire centre of iron and tinplate production using 'cutting edge' technology. Before the 1790s, industrialisation had brought few serious social problems and a considerable measure of prosperity to the area. Although industrially important the town did not possess a large population. Dispersed production resulted in a scatter of communities around the Afon Lwyd valley and its tributaries. With a population of 1,500, Pontypool was only a third larger than Newport in 1801. There was a sense in which small did mean beautiful. Hanbury paternalism ruled.

The opening of the Monmouthshire canal (1796) expanded coal mining and changed the iron industry. Vast quantities of coal went to Bristol and the West Country. New steam blown, coke fired furnaces opened in the valley. Migrants poured in from the Welsh countryside, the borderlands, Bristol and the west country. Newport's population rose to over 12,000 by 1839. A similar number settled in the Parish of Trevethin, with about a third of them residing in Pontypool and the rest crowding into new communities - Pontnewynydd, Abersychan, Garndiffaith and Varteg. The existing social infrastructure collapsed.

The Hanbury estate abandoned its industrial past, leasing the works and building the family's wealth by increasing land rentals. Capel Hanbury Leigh's social position was not in question, as Lord Lieutenant he was the Queen's representative in Monmouthshire and lived the life of a landed gentleman. His political power now depended upon making alliances with the new iron masters.

His hold over the community in Pontypool was under challenge. Radicals were meeting at the Bristol House and formed a Working Men's Association in 1837. These were people who held no traditional loyalty to the Hanbury family. Many of its members were recent migrants from Bristol, notably Willam Shell and his family and a travelling actor called William Jones, who set up as a watchmaker in the town in 1833 and with his wife was running the Bristol House by 1839.

The new communities were beyond Hanbury control. John Llewellyn, secretary of the Pontnewynydd Lodge was from west Wales and had been a London hatter. New settlers were predominantly young, male and aspirational – they had come hearing promise of opportunity. Most were independently minded and certainly few lacked self confidence. Pay days could get quite boisterous.

Concerned to stem public anti-social crime and public disorder, Capel Hanbury Leigh donated a site to the Poor Law Guardians to build a Work House (1837) well away from the town on a 'green field' site at Panteg. In the 1830s he restructured the Parish constabulary, appointing Superintendent Roberts in charge.

What's in the Museum?



Michael Sheen and the John Frost bust at the opening of the new Chartist Exhibition at Newport Museum

Newport Museum was presented in 1914 with a bronze bust of John Frost made by Edward Hornsby, teacher of modelling at the Newport Art School. This sculpture represents a turning point in Frost's reputation. From this date onwards, Frost was hailed as the man of his time, his character exonerated, his achievement recognised.

Hitherto, Frost's political opponent, Thomas Phillips the Mayor in 1839 was the acclaimed public hero. And during the Victorian era, the only statue erected in the town was the seated figure of Sir Charles Morgan. The attitude of the 'county set' of his time made it impossible

for Frost to ever resettle in Newport and this hostility was reflected in the obituaries that appeared in the local press at his death in 1877.

Edward Hornsby's bust was a counter point – a reminder that Frost had never been forgotten in his home town. The petitions for his release in the 1840s gained massive local

support. Undoubtedly in response to public pressure the Mayor and many Councillors signed a memorial in 1854 pleading for the pardon of John Frost. On his return from Tasmania in 1856, he was received by a large crowd at Newport.

An 'old Chartist' interviewed by the Argus in 1905 was adamant – 'the people of Newport were indignant about John Frost being transported and for years afterwards most of the people were Chartists' claimed James Whittaker. Edward Hornsby's bust demonstrates that Whittaker was right, Frost retained a hold on the public imagination – Newport was his town.

Interest in John Frost and Chartism appears to have grown in the period before and during the 'Great War' (1914-18). This is something we need to pursue in a later Newsletter. There has been recent debate as to whether that war had any purpose beyond defence of Empire – was Britain fighting to promote 'democracy'?

Les James

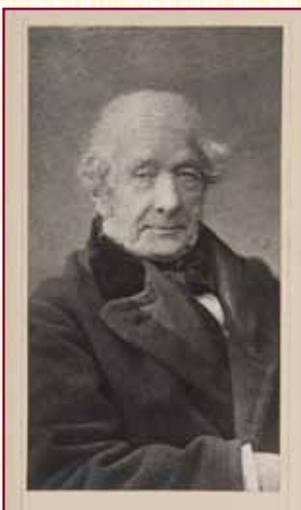


'Chartist Archive Hoard' found in Colliery Owner's Office 1915

Mr. Thomas Cartwright, a colliery proprietor, presented Newport Museum with a tin trunk full of bundles of hand written documents. His employees had been clearing out his office in Pillgwenlly, Newport.

H. Tudor Jones, a local antiquarian, had been invited to examine them "in a little storeroom over the museum above the roar of traffic passing through Dock Street". (South Wales Argus) This is the Victorian museum and library that was demolished in 1968 and replaced by the more spacious building currently in John Frost Square.

The reporter wrote in 1915 "Here there was hardly room to arrange the documents, many

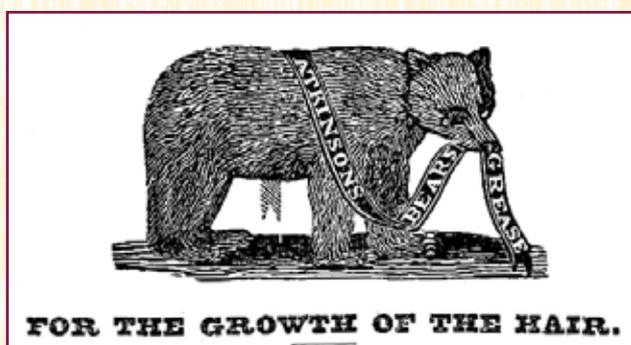


of which were covered with the dust of three-quarters of a century but with them all around me on tables, chairs, boxes and on the floor ... as the noise of the street died away... I seemed to find myself in the midst of those stirring days in Newport nearly 76 years ago when men were fighting and dying for reforms which have now become the commonplace of our 20th century legislation"

Most of the papers were identified as witness testimonies recorded for the local magistrates in November 1839. They had interviewed over 200 people brought before them at the Westgate hotel. Scribes had written down the statements and once signed, multiple copies were produced for the court proceedings. These 'depositions' formed the basis of the Crown's case for treason and sedition against John Frost and other Chartists in trials held at Monmouth Shire Hall in January 1840.

The museum curator (W.A. Gunn) and the librarian (J. Warner) jointly produced the first catalogue of these papers for the Chartist Centenary Commemoration of 1939. At this time, the papers were transferred to Newport Reference Library. During the 1960s they were organised into their present format of 25 bound volumes by the chief librarian, W.J. Collett.

Recently the whole collection has been digitally copied at the Gwent Archives. The 175th Anniversary Year is a fitting opportunity to commence a searchable online resource suitable for the 21st century. The 'Chartist Trails to Trials' project is supported by the Heritage Lottery Fund is set ready to launch in 2014.



Calendar Of Events 2014 – The 175th Anniversary

13 FEBRUARY (Thursday) 7.00pm
Newport Civic Society at Civic Centre, Newport
John Hallam (Chair of Maindee Festival) leads discussion on the options for a replacement 'Chartism' artwork
Open to non-members

MAY, JUNE, JULY **Tredegar, Blaina, Pontypool, Newport**

'Taster Days' for the Chartist Trails to Trials Project organised by **Gwent Archives** (Ebbw Vale) Guided tour of Chartist locations, led by heritage experts, followed by practical document session. **FREE** A buffet lunch (and where appropriate transport) will be provided
Dates to be announced Contact: rhiannon.phillips@gwentarchives.gov.uk

University of South Wales has a range of short Heritage courses For details contact elaine.knight@southwales.ac.uk
Or paul.e.thomas@ntlworld.com

1 NOVEMBER (Saturday)
Annual Chartist Convention, Newport City Campus Speakers include: Prof. Malcolm Chase, Prof. Owen Ashton, Dr. Ryland Wallace

3 NOVEMBER (Monday)
Chartist 'Night Out' performance at the 'Stute', Stow Hill

4 NOVEMBER (Tuesday)
Childrens Chartist March from Stow Hill to Westgate Square

Art Workshops on 'Chartism and Democracy'- Designing posters, badges, banners, collages, 3D, mixed media, mobiles etc - All ideas welcome Looking for interested community groups (all ages), willing artists and venues Contact: **Kim Colebrook** kim@candoteam.wanadoo.co.uk

email the Editor: les.james22@gmail.com

NETWORKING

Pat P., Kate S. and several other readers ask "how can I take part in the Trails to Trials Project". Colin at Gwent Archives is busy making lists of volunteers. This is an ambitious project - transcribing hundreds of documents - and we need all the help you can give. Get in touch immediately:

colin.gibson@gwentarchives.gov.uk

Don't worry if you haven't done any transcription - training is all part of the project. Why not dip your toe into the water? Join a summer 'Taster Day' at Tredegar/Pontypool/Newport.

Lisa Powell (Rhondda LHS) wants to know 'what is happening in Newport about replacing the mural'. Pleased to hear from you Lisa - many others have asked the same question and I believe things are happening. Any day now we should hear Newport City Council announce the setting up of a Chartist Commission for the city. Lisa do hope you and your society members will join in the 175th Anniversary celebrations. The Dinas miners marched to Newbridge (Pontypridd) on Sunday 3rd November 1839 - so we hope to hear more about the Rhondda Chartists in a later Newsletter. Thanks for putting me in touch with Dean Powell, author of the recently published "*Dr William Price: Wales' first radical*".

Our thanks to Dr. Janette Martin at Hull University for placing the Newsletter on the SSLH website, which she edits. This will ensure that news of the 175th travels far and wide. Go to <http://www.sslh.org.uk/index.php> and look for News and Events.

For over fifty years the Society for the Study of Labour History has been an important connection between labour historians (professional and amateur) and an active promoter of archive preservation and resources.

On the SSLH website, you can find the Chartist Newsletter published by Professor Malcolm Chase (Leeds University) who generously has circulated our Newsletters 1 & 2 to all his readers. His no.8 Newsletter reports how Parliament commemorated Chartism for the first time last year. Hywel Francis and 77 other MPs signed a House of Commons' Early Day Motion to mark the 175th anniversary of the publication of the People's Charter 1838. A permanent exhibition Chartism 1838-1858 opened on the Upper Committee Corridor of the House of Commons. See on-line version at <http://www.parliament.uk/about/art-in-parliament/news/chartism-1838-1858/>

SEND YOUR comments and views. How can we improve the NEWSLETTER?

Please tell us about any Chartist Event in 2014 you are organising.

Share your Chartist story with the world! - our aim is to reach the very places Frost & co were banished

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The illustrations included in the newsletter were taken from 1830's editions of the Monmouthshire Merlin



30, STRAND.



Fighting Hidden Hunger: Restoring Hope

Brwydro Newyn Cudd - Adfer Gobaith

FROM IAN, project manager "Thanks for publicity in Xmas edition.... Every little helps"

- All the food we give out is donated. At our warehouse, volunteers weigh and sort the food.
- Frontline professionals in our partner agencies, such as doctors, health visitors, social workers, probation officers, debt advisers and housing associations identify people in crisis and issue them with a foodbank voucher.
- Clients bring their voucher to a foodbank centre within 7 days, where it can be exchanged for a supply of emergency food which lasts 3-5 days.

If you can help at NEWPORT, EBBW VALE or CARDIFF contact Ian 07891 177 700
For further info: <http://cardiff.foodbank.org.uk/>

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Please advertise the listed forthcoming Chartist Events.

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