

Royal Institution of South Wales

Local History Book Fair

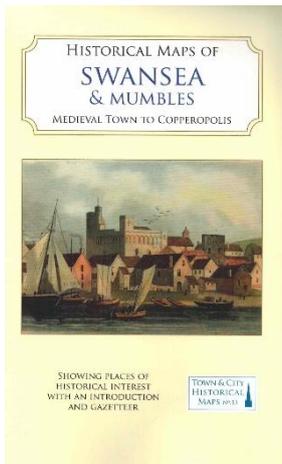
8th November 2025

at Swansea Museum

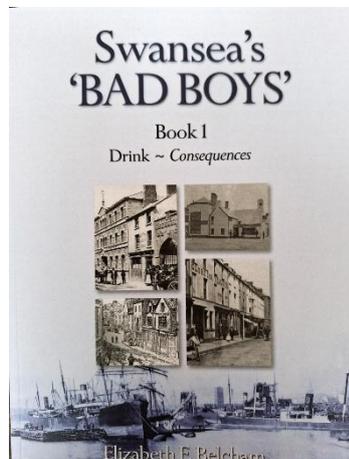
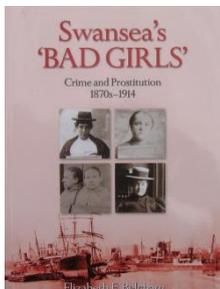
10.00-4.00

Among the stallholders at this year's bookfair will be the authors and publishers of these maps, books and journals. Some will be selling those very items. In other cases the items illustrated just give an indication of the expertise of the people sitting at the table.

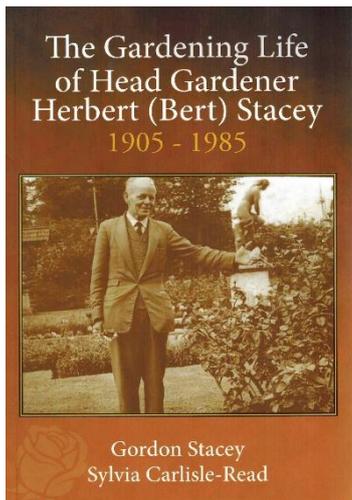
please scroll through – 13 pages in all



Helen Fulton will be representing the **Historic Towns Trust**. Their Swansea map is a superb reference in itself, but also has a mass of contextual notes.

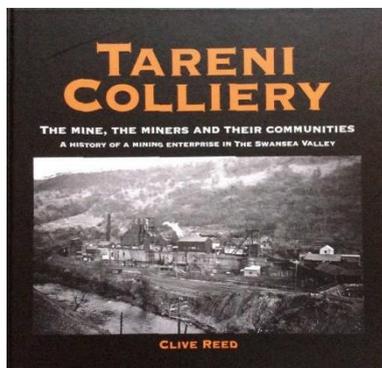


Elizabeth Belcham's "Bad Girls" is one of the few books which has delved into the story of Swansea's poorest. She has now turned her attention to the "Bad Boys" and the first two 80-page booklets, on Drink and on Sailors Ashore came out on October 3rd.



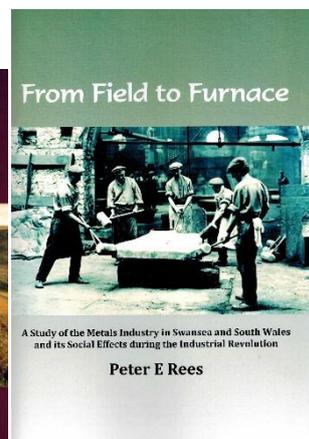
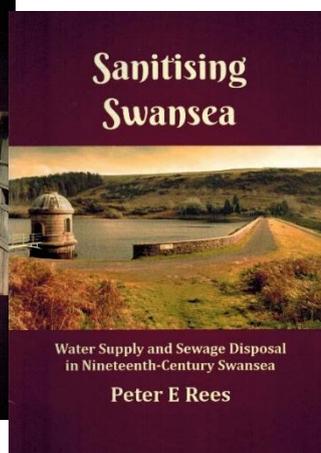
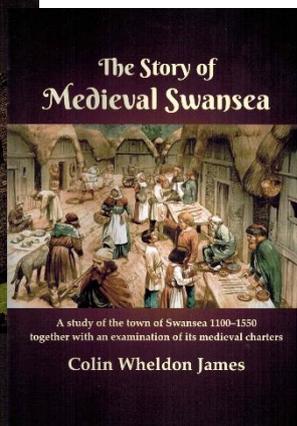
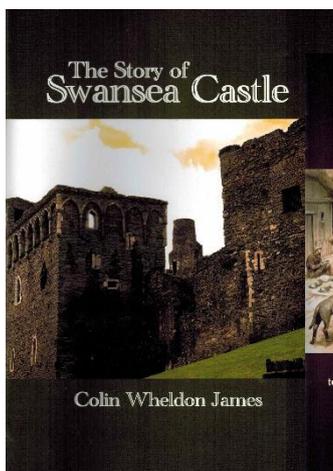
This book by **Gordon Stacey and Sylvia Carlisle-Reed** is also brand new. It is a substantial act of homage to Gordon's father Bert as a gardener. After a long apprenticeship elsewhere, he became head gardener to the Williams family of *Maesygwernen House*, and then, most importantly, at Morryston Hospital which was built in its grounds.

By the way the book is interesting on the Williamses and on the Morryston of the time.

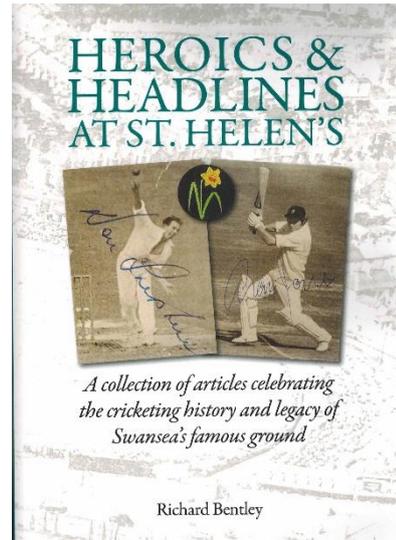


If you want to know anything of the history of the Swansea Canal or industry in the Tawe Valley, go to **Clive Reed**. His enthusiasm and wide knowledge mark him out. We are delighted he can be present.

The Swansea Branch of the Historical Association has published a number of excellent studies of the locality and will be represented by their Chairman, Colin Wheldon James, who gave a fine talk on Swansea's Minster (St. Mary's Church) at the recent History Day. The H.A. also publishes a historical magazine, *Chronicle*.

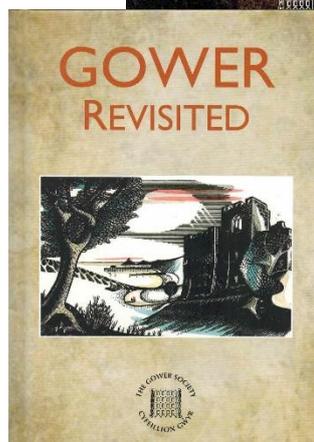
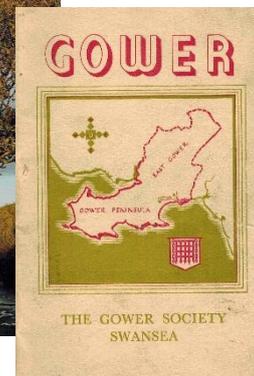
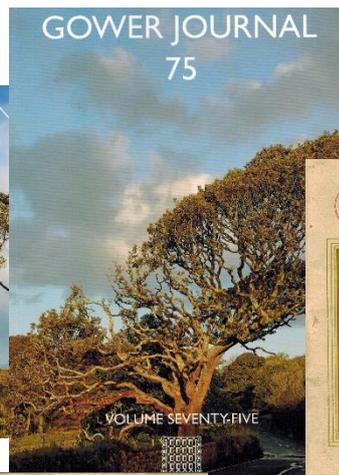
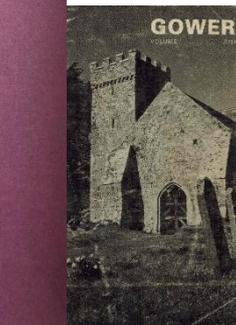
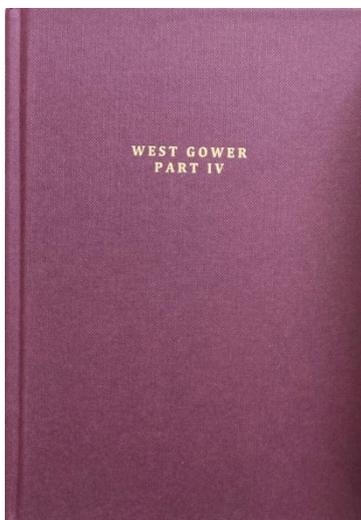


Here is another book hot off the press. Written by **Richard Bentley**, it is published by the **St. Helen's Balconiers**, whose mainstay, John Williams, will be present. It marks the end of first-class cricket at that ground. There is, of course, nostalgia, but the book is, fundamentally, a celebration. It is very well written, produced and illustrated

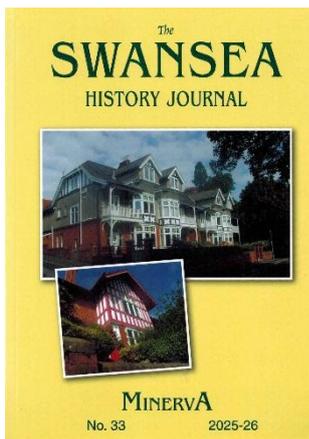
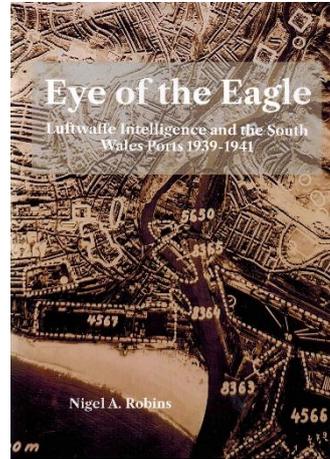
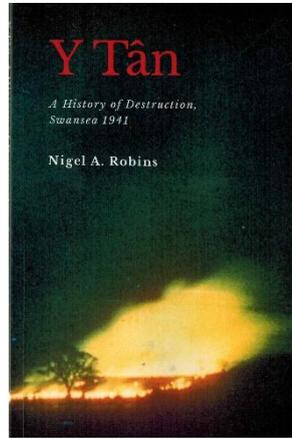
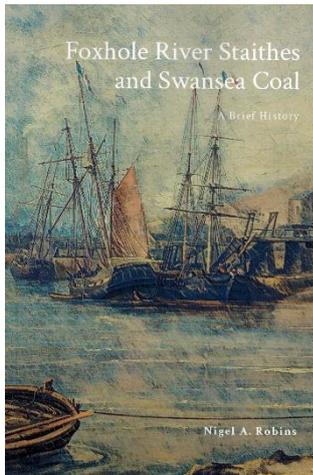


The Gower Society has been a stalwart of the bookfair over twenty years. They have published ever since their

foundation in 1948. Their latest venture is a facsimile edition of Rev. J.D. Davies's history of what he called West Gower, Volume 4 (1894). It tells of Penrice, Oxwich and Nicholaston. Don't judge a book by its cover. Fascinating text, fine period illustrations.

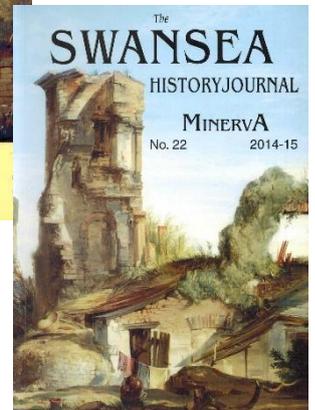
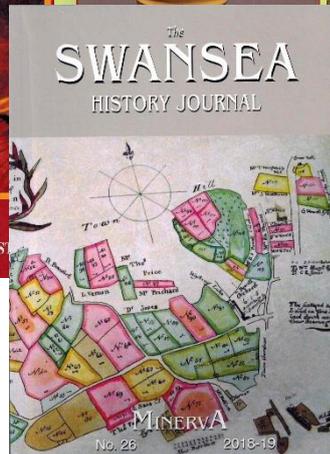
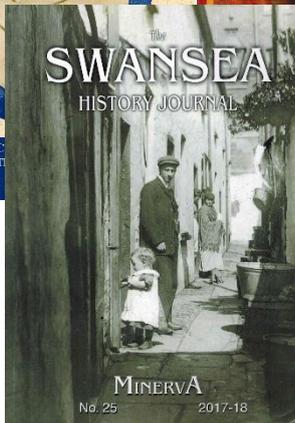
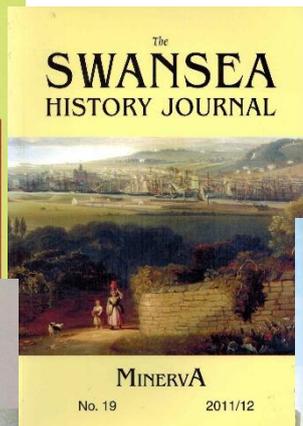
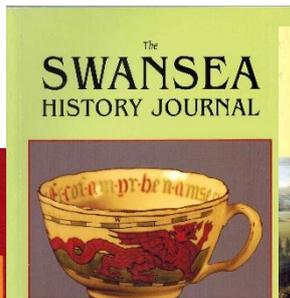
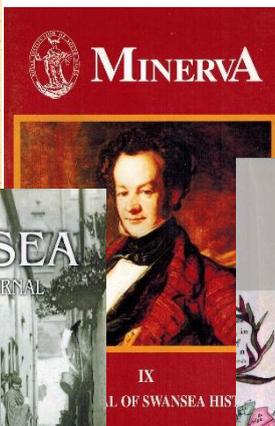
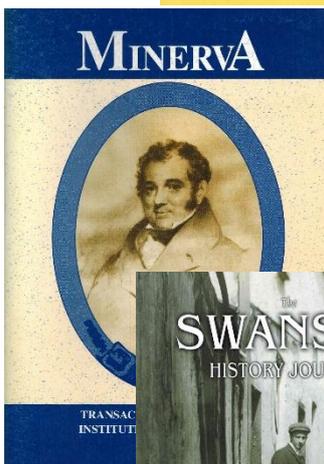


Nigel Robins gave an enthralling talk based on the first of these books at History Day. If you have an interest in the early coal industry, Kilvey, the Swansea blitz... & in fact almost any area of Swansea history, it's definitely a stall to aim for.

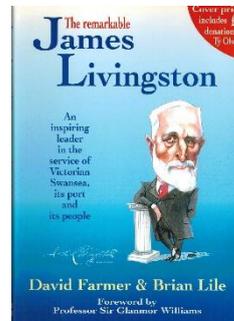
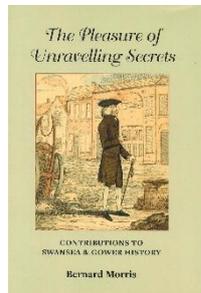
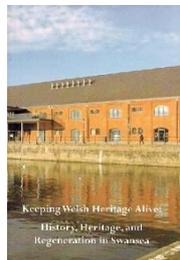
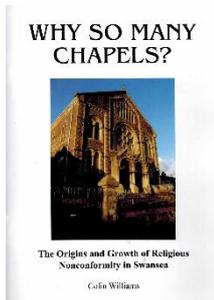


The Royal Institution of South Wales (Friends of Swansea Museum), are organisers of the fair. The current *Swansea History Journal / Minerva* (Volume 33) has sold well, but copies will still be available.

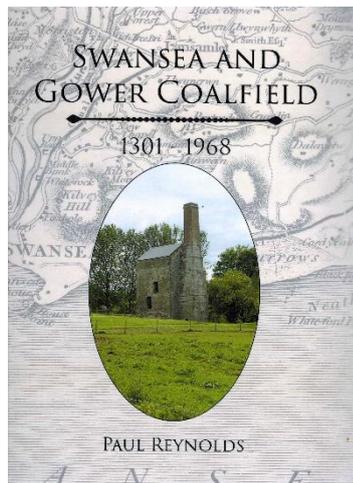
The journal first came out in 1993, and many backnumbers will be there. Perhaps make a note of any you are short of before you come. There is an index to the journal on the R.I. website - risw.org gets you there.



The R.I.S.W. stall will also have second hand books, pamphlets and historical prints. To encourage sales they are priced very reasonably. An early perusal is suggested. They do go.

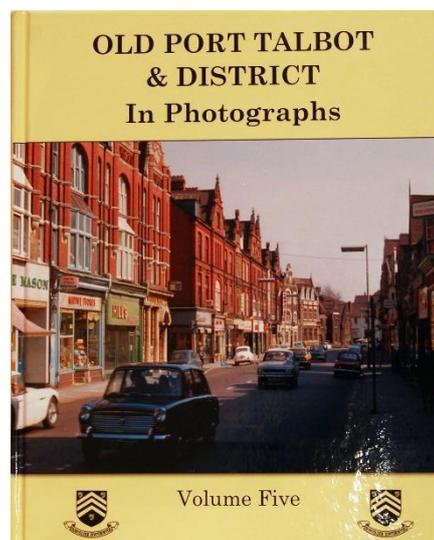


Other R.I. publications or co-publications.

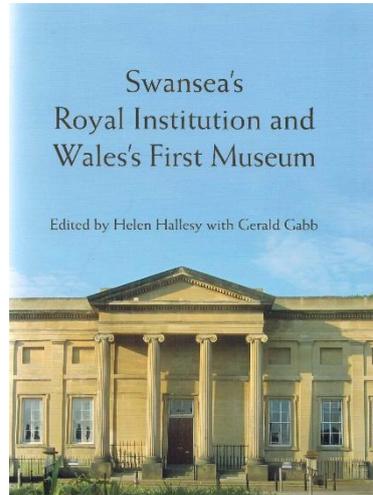
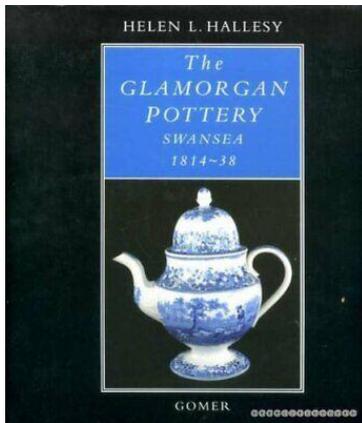


The **South West Wales Industrial Archaeology Society** holds regular talks and issues a Bulletin, full of information on local industrial history. Not surprisingly **Paul Reynolds's** book, shown here, which became an instant standard work, has sold out. But he and his colleagues are very much worth talking to.

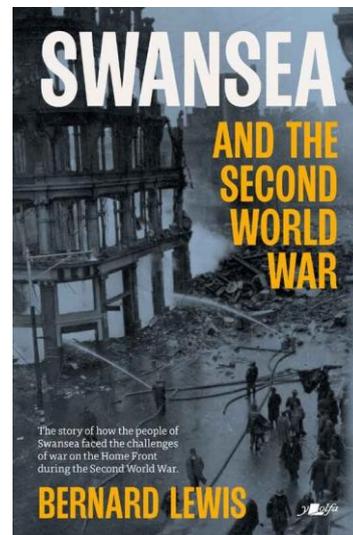
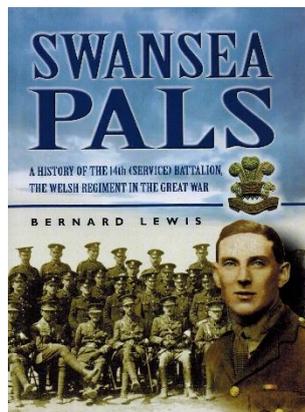
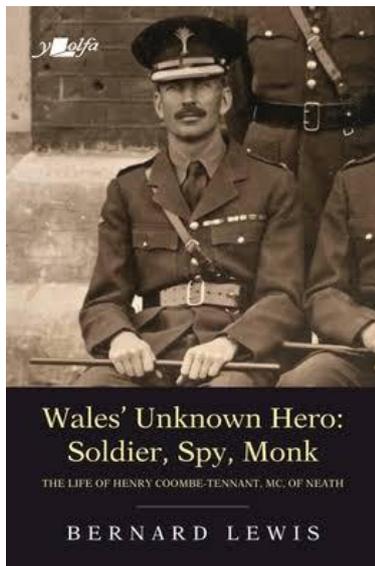
Sally Jones, in her own right, and as an officer of the the **Port Talbot Historical Society**, has long been involved in local history publishing, with some first rate, thought-provoking material in the mix. We are very pleased that our friends from Port Talbot continue to grace the fair.



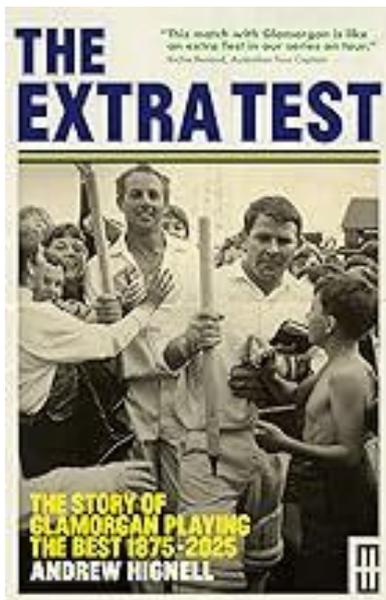
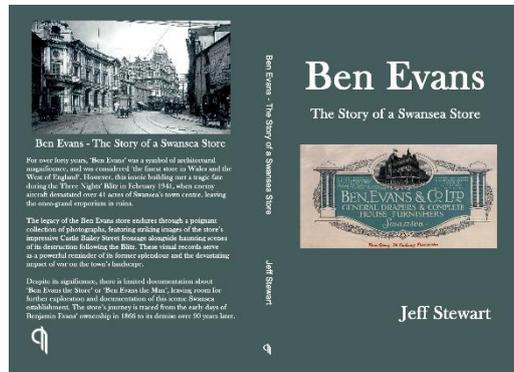
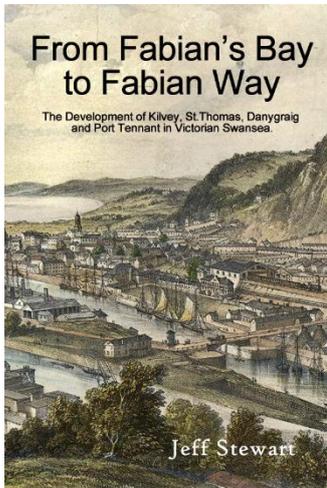
Helen Hallesy is the leading expert on local ceramics. You may not have noticed, though, that she put masses of time and expertise into the recent substantial history of the R.I.S.W.. Find a copy, turn the pages, and you will note her knowledgeable imprint on the pottery section and on a lot, lot more, across the board.



Bernard Lewis lives in Neath, but over a number of years has contributed a series of superbly researched books to our understanding of Swansea's history. The most recent covers World War II with a thoroughness nobody has previously approached.

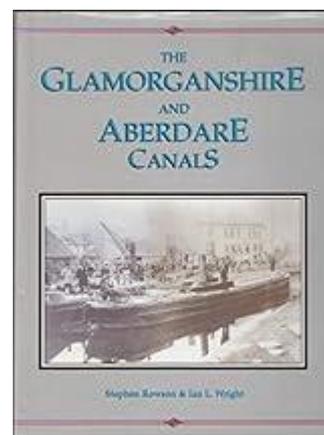


Jeff Stewart wrote a piece on Glendinning Moxham, architect, for the current *Swansea History Journal / Minerva* – and did a great deal towards getting Moxham a blue plaque which you can see at the Bristol Channel Yachtclub in Southend. Jeff is a strong advocate for Swansea's Eastside, witness the first of these books. And last year he put together the first full account of Swansea's Ben Evans store.



Andrew Hignell has been scorer for Glamorgan's first team since 1982. He curates the Museum of Welsh Cricket in Cardiff and has written extensively on the theme. This is his latest book.

Stephen Rowson has written on Welsh Canals and is also a discriminating collector of things historical. A stall not to be missed.



Societies generate much of the interest in local history. We welcome the **Blackpill Historical Society**, **Clydach Historical Society** and the **Neath Antiquarian Society**.



Each has a website: <https://www.vivianhall.org/activities/blackpill-local-history-society>

<http://clydachhistoricalsociety.org.uk/>

<http://www.neathantiquariansociety.co.uk/>



A special welcome to **Swansea Eastside Historical Society** who have not been with us in Swansea Museum before.

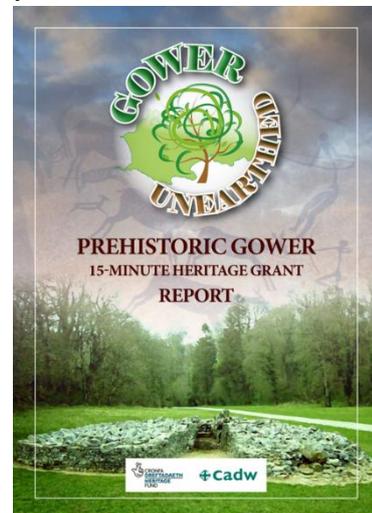


<https://swanseaeastside.weebly.com/>



Gower Unearthed are likely to be there – one of the liveliest forces around in heritage education. It's a fascinating website.

<https://www.gowerunearthed.com/about-1>



West Glamorgan Archive Service will soon be in the midst of moving from the Civic Centre to Y Storfa in Princess Way. It's great that they are able to make time to be present. Historical professionals.



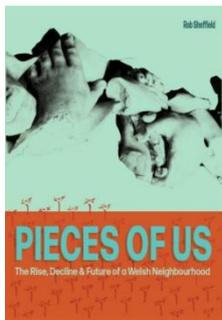
John Law is a professional historian who wrote for the current journal about a rollicking seaborne tour to Swansea by English gentlemen in 1803. He will be selling books.

Selwyn Walters will have (and I quote) *“second-hand books, journals, and pamphlets, mainly with a Swansea interest, a fairly large collection of Swansea postcards...and other ephemera with a Swansea connection. So, bit of a mixed bag.”* It sounds like my sort of stall.



And **Peter Bailey** will be bringing *“a wide selection of local history books covering most of South Wales.”*

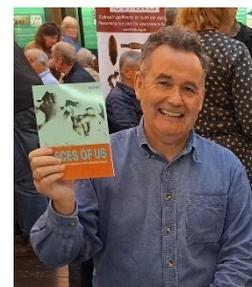
If you are into local history and have yet to discover **the Oxfam Bookshop** in Castle Street, you ought. It is highly recommended. They will bring a selection to the museum.

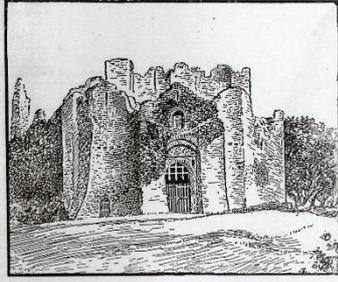


Rob Sheffield has put together a penetrating and very individual study of Greenhill and its history.

He writes: *“I’ve also written a short story about Swansea, and am wondering whether it’s possible to give away some limited copies at the book fair? It’s fiction, not history...”*

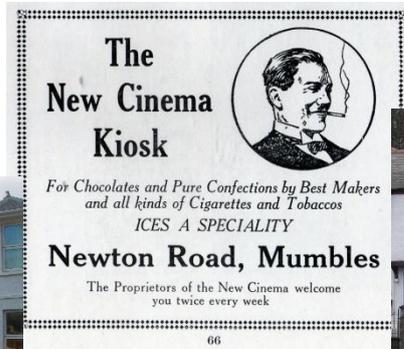
Interested ? this is your man.



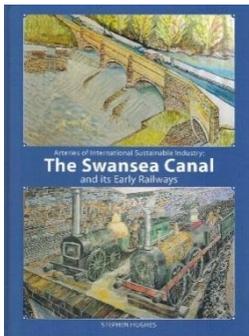
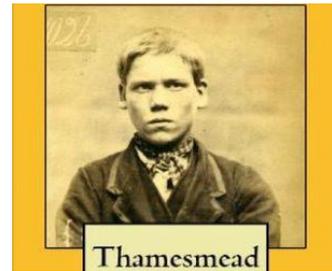


The Story of Mumbles is a group co-ordinated by Beverley Rogers which has put together a website which is very well worth looking at -

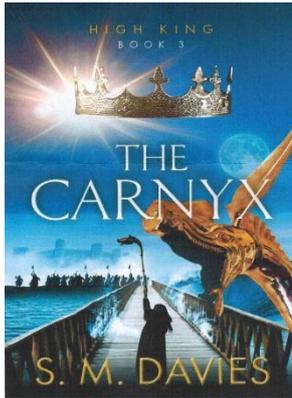
<https://www.storyofmumbles.org.uk/about/contact-us>



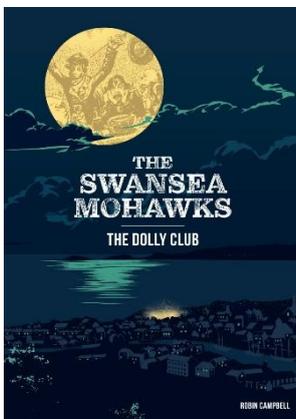
Purple Unicorn is an established publisher based in Ystradgynlais with a range of titles – try their website: <http://www.purpleunicornmedia.com/>. Jon N. Davies hopes to have a book out on the Gough family, local landowners, ready for the fair.



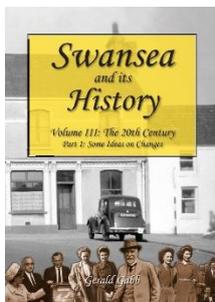
A welcome to the **Swansea Canal Society** who will have Stephen Hughes's monumental study of the canal. We tend to look at industrial growth through a Victorian lens, with railways as the arteries. In fact the Canal was a huge boost to Swansea's economy years before the South Wales Railway arrived.



Susan Davies is a local historical novelist who has been in our midst at previous bookfairs. She has now published Book 3 of a series of four on Vortigern, in her own words *“the 5th Century Welsh warlord who became King of all Britons after the Romans abandoned the islands...the king and his allies battle their enemies for control of the kingdom with the aid of the carnyx, an ancient Celtic war horn...”*



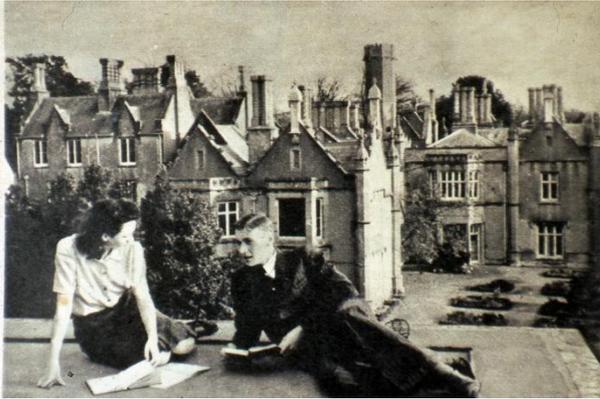
Robin Campbell has written on the locality before – on the Manselton racecourse, on Rebecca and on street betting, for example. Now he has a book on “The Swansea Mohawks, the Dolly Club”, violent pranksters of the 1800s. It’s touch and go, but the book should be on his table.



Gerald Gabb is still working on 20th Century material. On sale will be his first go at this which came out a year ago. 383 pages, 1013 illustrations, but it’s a history book not a picture book.

Carole Hopkin’s stall has been an attraction at the bookfair since at least 2009 – don’t miss it.

Swansea University History Department is a very welcome addition to the fair, with books for sale. At one end of the interest in local history lies nostalgia. It's inevitable, we are human. But it behoves us to keep a continuing link with academic studies. It is an essential counter balance.



Of course, neither the University (then just a constituent College of the University of Wales), nor the students are, any more, quite as they appear here

NOT JUST BOOKS !

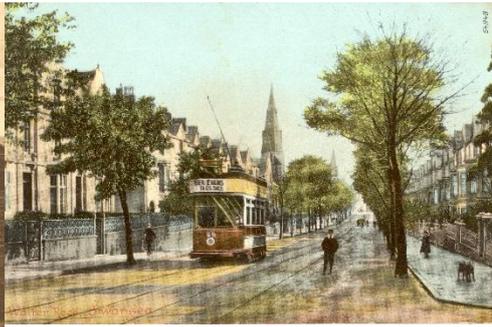
Caswell Photo Restoration offer a range of services – see their website:

<https://www.caswellphotorestoration.com/section865945.html> The company name doubtless derives from where they are based, but it will not have escaped the notice of John Smith that some of the earliest photographs in the world were taken in....Caswell.



And the bookfair would not be the same without the **Williamsons** superb range of **local historical postcards**. Used in context, the scenes they portray are the very stuff of history.





see you there I hope.