

YOUR PROJECTS

Celebrating the work of family and local history societies



“A strong sense of community that’s been built up over centuries”



Above: Raglan Primary School History Detectives busy in the churchyard at St Cadoc’s

Raglanpedia is an ambitious village-based website that aims to show there’s a whole lot more to the Welsh village than just its celebrated castle. **Alan Crosby** takes a peek at this innovative project

Something I’ve noticed quite a bit recently, looking through websites and exploring the ways in which local organisations present family and local history, is the growing sense of community involvement. Not only does this provide resources and volunteers for their projects, but it also means the community itself is closely tied together by the network of knowledge. What was this place like in the past? Who were the people who lived here? Answering these questions helps us to appreciate and value the present, and assists us in our aim of guarding the inheritance of the past to hand on to future generations.

At Raglan in Monmouthshire, ideas such as these helped to inspire Raglanpedia, an ambitious village-based website, drawing on the work and enthusiasm of the local history society. The homepage says that ‘Our vision is to share our history through maps, QR plaques and stories of local people, places and activities. Our goal is to raise awareness of the history of Raglan District and to celebrate the strong sense of community that has been built up over the centuries. We have identified four target groups: Raglan Primary School children, people researching their family history along with tourists and residents who wish to learn more about our lovely villages.’

Raglan is best known for its magnificent castle, one of the most architecturally impressive in Wales, but there is plenty of other history and many square miles of beautiful peaceful countryside as well.

The website has a historical trail around

the village and castle (also available in French for visitors from Raglan’s twin village of Parc -sur-Sarthe, France) while another trail highlights the neighbouring Welsh village of Llandenny.

The trail around St Cadoc’s is based on the work of the children from Raglan Primary School History Detectives, who spend every Tuesday after school (rain or shine) helping to maintain the churchyard and study the stories of the people buried there. The trail currently highlights a group of 20 gravestones of special interest. The close involvement of primary schoolchildren in active work on village and community heritage is so encouraging, a fantastic idea.

Another section, Raglan District Stories, ties in with this as it tells memories and biographies for people from the village researched through face to face interviews by children from the school and written up as part of an essay prize competition. Two new books will be published on Raglan in the Second World War called *The Raglan Fallen* and *Raglan in War Time* by Brinley Morgan. The online stories have links to sections on relevant buildings, historical events and a wide variety of local organisations such as the brass band.

A parallel website, also operated by the local history society, is called Raglan Village Domesday. Here, there is much more in-depth coverage, with a major section on records and sources, ranging from census records, medieval documents, indexed transcripts of parish registers, and electoral registers to indexes to the Raglan petty

sessions from the 1920s and 1930s – a type of record that I don’t recall seeing on any website before. There are background essays on topics such as employment and agriculture, transport links and the Civil War siege of the castle. The churchyard is given complete coverage with attractive photographs of all the graves. A helpful section reproduces maps and photographs.

I met Cheryl Morgan, who masterminds the website with her husband, when she visited the WDYT YA? show in February, and asked her where she got the idea from. She explained: ‘I’ve been doing my own family history for many years and know how special it is to visit the places where my ancestors lived. This project is my way of giving back to the many people who’ve helped me over the years.’

‘Thousands of people come to Raglan Castle each year but only a small number realise the village also has a special history.’

‘Our greatest joy is being able to help people from around the world learn about their roots here in Raglan.’ ■

Fact file

Contact: For more information, or to get involved in Raglanpedia, email Raglan_History@yahoo.co.uk

Website: Visit the homepage at: www.raglanpedia.org.uk