

The Revd John D. Davies, Rector of Cheriton and Llanmadoc, wrote a series of articles in the Gower Church Magazine entitled '***The Old Century and The New. The Times Are Changed and We Are Changed With Them***'.

He opens his first article with this summary. "It goes without saying that the age in which we live is emphatically an age of progress. Time has moved on, and people and things have done the same. The old order has changed, and in a way which excites no small amount of surprise and astonishment when we come to post it all up. The past century has witnessed the application of steam, which has been utilized on land and sea, and has contributed more than anything else to promote the development of trade and commerce, and consequently the wealth and prosperity of this kingdom and every other. Leaving the railways and the huge ocean going steamers to do their own work, it has been no small boon in many ways to have the ponderous traction engine dragging its load of ten tons with ease, and steering its way along our narrow country lanes and through gateways, with as much precision as a man would drive a horse and cart".

The Revd. Davies was most enthusiastic about the introduction of electricity and other technical advances. "Electricity, that subtle and mysterious force, is employed in transmitting information of every kind to the remotest corners of the globe. It lights our streets and large public buildings, and is destined in this respect to usurp the place of gas: while as a motive power it already drives the electric tram. The Rector reminds his readers that the close of the last century brought the typewriter (largely used in lawyers and merchants' offices), the microphone, the phonograph, photography and the Rontgen, alias the X rays".

Transport does not escape the Reverend's attention. "The close of the last century has given us the bicycle, and nearly half the civilised world now rides upon the silent wheel: and this vehicle has so much to recommend it, that it has evidently come to stay. We may also mention the motor-car, which is more and more coming to the front; and we may be pretty sure that, like the bicycle, it has come to stay". also'.

John Davies looks to the future. "If we were to enumerate all the inventions and discoveries made in the fine as well as the useful arts during the last hundred years, we might be disposed to think that human progress had attained its ultimatum. But there is really no finality in these things; the march of intellect is ever onward, and onward it will go. The twentieth century, which has dawned upon us, will disclose fresh wonders, and people will live to see things we scarcely dream of at the present time. We appear to be on the eve of witnessing submarine navigation and flying machines. Count Zapoline's (Zeppelin) flying machine, the construction of which cost him £50,000, has made his first trip, and accomplished it fairly well. Wireless telegraphy, the latest and most wonderful scientific discovery, has made its first stride, but is not yet quite under control. Its inventor, Professor Marconi, and others are devoting much attention to it, and complete success is anticipated. That an electric current, carrying a message, can be sent through the air for 20 miles, without any connecting medium in the shape of a wire, is absolutely inconceivable, and has an appearance of forcing nature to give up her secrets". I am sure the good Rector, if writing today, would be commenting not just on the technological advances occurring but also on the pace with which they develop. For example, it took radio in the USA 38 years to reach an audience of 50 million. TV took 13 years to reach a similar size audience. The Internet took 4 years to reach an audience of 50 million.

John Davies mentions the introduction of chloroform alongside X rays so that 'the skilful surgeon goes to his work with perfect confidence and the patient is relieved without experiencing the slightest pain'. Despite these advances, it is clear from the 'Death Notices' in the Gower Church Magazine of the early 1900s, that infant and child mortality, deaths from influenza, pneumonia and trauma arising from even minor accidents, were common. We have to look later in this century (20<sup>th</sup>) for the major advances in medicine and the virtual elimination of so many 'killers'.

Note:

The author of these articles from 1901 was the son of John Davies, **Rector of Reynoldston**. John Davies (Cheriton) was brought up in what is now **The Old Rectory, Reynoldston**. Indeed, even after his appointment as Rector of Cheriton/Llanmadoc, John Davies commuted from **Reynoldston**, for a number of years, to his parish. He then built the impressive Swiss style vicarage in Llanmadoc. The story of him having married a Swiss lady, hence the vicarage was designed to make her feel at home, is not true. JD never married. JD was a man of many parts. An authority on the history of Gower, a member of the Swansea Scientific Society, a contributor to the Oxford Movement and a skilled wood carver. JD designed and made the choir stalls, altar rails and altar in Cheriton Church. He died in 1911.

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