

Breconshire Local & Family History Society (BLFHS)
Cymdeithas Hanes Lleol a Theuluoedd Brycheiniog



Newsletter 11 – May 2012

Welcome to our eleventh Newsletter. We invite you to contribute articles, tips, questions and answers for others to share. Feedback is always welcome.

May Meeting Review

Subject: A gentle walk around Llangammarch Wells, led by members of the Llangammarch Wells Local History Society (LWLHS).

Thirteen members and friends attended this very successful event on Wednesday, 2nd May. It was a cool, cloudy, but dry afternoon when we met at the refurbished Alexandra Hall in Llangammarch. Our hosts took us on a tour of the village, explaining the changes that had come to the village, especially since the coming of the railway in 1867. We were shown the houses that had once been shops and other businesses, and marvelled at the self-sufficiency of such villages, even into the middle of the twentieth century. The afternoon ended with a lovely homemade tea, supplied by LWLHS members

A 35-page booklet is available from the LWLHS, for a small charge, giving a comprehensive history of and a guide to the village and its surroundings. The booklet is entitled *Llangammarch Wells Past and Present: A History and Guide*. To purchase the booklet, or to find out more about the LWLHS, e-mail Gaynor Williams at gaynor06@gmail.com or phone 01591 620368. The Llangammarch Wells Local History Society plans to launch its own website in the near future.

A Good Read – the poor state of the roads!

I have recently purchased a book entitled *The Diary of Benjamin Newton Rector of Wath 1816-1818*, edited by C. P. Fendall and E. A. Crutchley, published by Cambridge, 1933. Benjamin Newton (1762-1830) was appointed vicar of Defynnog Church, as his first preferment. His diary includes a visit back to Breconshire, which I will include in the next Newsletter. In this Newsletter, however, I thought Benjamin Newton's description of the state of the roads in the early 19th century was quite amusing. (Fishermen and fish sizes seem to spring to mind with this entry.)

5th Sept 1816 in Shropshire: *The Botfields at dinner and Rev Wood, who told a story of the Shropshire roads very much in point, of a person who saw a hat lying in the road and on taking it up he saw a head under it which opened his mouth and begged to be drawn out of the slough which was at length effected and the man said he had a horse under him which he would have been obliged to abandon had he not the spur stuck in the long tail and gave him an opportunity of laying hold of a few hairs. Waggoners were sometimes rescued when there is nothing to be seen but the lash of his long whip.*" (page 21)

Victorian & Edwardian Memorial Cards

Member, Alison Skipper has suggested that we have a section on the website where we can include transcriptions of the information on Breconshire related memorial cards. She already has a number of these and is compiling a transcription of her own cards. I will do the same. If anyone wishes to contribute to this collection, get in touch with me at the usual address etc.

Snippets from the Press

Here is another article following on from last month's item

The Express, 6th. March, 1913

SOLDIER'S GRAVE AT CEFNGORWYDD VILLAGE – Can any reader give some account of "the soldier's grave" at the foot of an old oak situated in a field on Llwyn-y-gweision Farm,

near Cefngorwydd Village, Llangammarch. This village stands upon the high way leading to Ludlowfach and Llandovery.

T.W.B.

The Express, 20th. March, 1913

SOLDIER'S GRAVE AT CEFNGORWYDD. Your correspondent T.W.B. Is anxious to get some information. I am also looking for all I can find. It is now nearly forty years or more since I first heard of it from old residents in the neighbourhood, who in turn had their information from the generation before. According to tradition a battle took place on the ridge between Cefngorwydd and Llwydlo fach, when some soldiers were killed and buried near there. It is said that one soldier was killed and buried at the foot of the old oak on Llwyngweision Farm. I believe there was once a small mound near the tree, marking the spot, but there is nothing now, the mound having been levelled long ago by the plough. In company with school mates, I have many times played around the old oak, and I particularly dreaded the thought of staying there until it was dark, for in those days I heard so much from old country people about ghosts, hobgoblins, corpse candles, phantom funerals, hell-hounds, and the Queen of Terror (gwrach y rhabin). There is a tradition of four more graves on a farm close by called Pantshoityn, and not long since a soldier's sword was found there. This ought to satisfy antiquarians that a battle took place here, and that soldiers were buried in accordance with the traditions handed down to us. Very probably the battle took place in the 12th century, and waged all

over Eppynt down to the Vale of Irfon. The "Black book of Carmarthen" refers particularly to a grave on Eppynt in the Vale of Gowel, thus:-

"Bet epint yn nyhffrin Gowel"

(Eppynt grave in the Vale of Gowel)

I have made enquiries about the grave, but so far found nothing to mark the spot. On Tyr Abad I know two farms, Blaengefail and Abergefail, and the Vale of Gefail must be in the locality. It is recorded in the "History of Breconshire" that renowned Owain Iola Goch was buried in a field in the parish of Trallwng. My late grandmother told me of other graves on a farm across the Irfon called Cildu, and not long ago a friend of mine, a Breconshire antiquarian who has the legendary lore of the county at his finger's end, told me that he dug some feet into a grave at Cildu and found a human tooth, which he has still in his possession. There is a very curious stone erected into the pine end of this old farm. . It is believed to be Roman. Cildu means, in my opinion, "The dark retreat," or rather "The shaded retreat". This definition is strangely appropriate, because the old farm is in a secluded spot, on the verge of wooded Irfon, and must have been the retreating refuge of some ancient warrior.

BRYCHAN AP RHYS, Cardiff.

NEXT MEETING

Date and time: Wednesday, 13th Jun 2012 at 2:00 pm (the 2nd Wednesday in June)

Venue: Brecon Library

Subject: The BLFHS Annual General Meeting,
followed by

"Family Skeletons": presentations open to anyone.

A series of five to ten minute presentations on an interesting item from **your** family history. Presentations already confirmed include:

The China Connection, by Alison Noble

Emigration to Pennsylvania, by Rob Eckley

Last female in Brecon to be hanged, cut down & burnt at the stake,
by Hilary Williams.

BLFHS WEBSITE: Our website address: www.blfhs.co.uk

CONTACT DETAILS

If you wish to respond to or comment on an item in this newsletter, or contribute to the next newsletter or to our website, please contact our Chairperson:

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