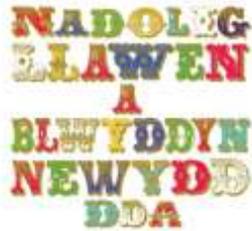




Newsletter 28 – November 2013

The Christmas Issue



The Committee wishes you a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

We look forward to corresponding with, and meeting more of our Members in 2014.

November Meeting Review

Mr Arthur Robinson “*Brecon Railways*”. Mr Robinson told us about the early days of the railways coming into Brecon. He explained how different railway companies competed for traffic yet came to agreements over running rights on their tracks. The movement of bulk goods, especially coal, was a major factor in ensuring the success of the railways. The speaker had planned to use a rather ancient epidiascope to display his maps and photographs. Unfortunately, the projected images were too dim to be visible to the audience, so he resorted to passing his material around the audience instead. Mr Robinson’s talk prompted much discussion among the audience, and a number of fascinating anecdotes about travelling on the railways were shared. Mr Robinson’s talk and the ensuing discussion are available as sound files in the members’ section of our website.

Prior to the main talk, Helen Whyte gave the latest in her short illustrated presentations on family history internet resources, this time concentrating on the amazing rate at which new online databases are appearing.

Hot off the Press

- **Politically incorrect or what?**

Brecknock Beacon – 25th. March 1889

WANTED, a PLAIN COOK, able to wash and bake, for a family of three. Age about 25; good wages – Apply, Office of this Paper.

You didn't have to be good looking and glamorous to get a job in those days!

- ***The Express* 27th February 1913**

PARISH CUSTOMS – These customs varied much in old times. There must be many of your readers who have had handed down to them some particulars of old customs, feasts, and incidents, As I am interested in them, I shall be glad to see them included in your interesting column, which I welcome.

LLANDDEW BOY

- ***The Express* 20th March 1913 “Peeps into the Past”**

OLD PARISH CUSTOMS. - “Llanddew Boy” may be interested in the following:-
The old women of Breconshire had not many amusements in the days of long ago. Still they had their social gatherings, in the form of knitting parties, which met in rotation at different farm houses during the long winter evenings. The stockings were sold to army agents for the use of soldiers, and fetched a good price. The pins used being large, a good knitter could make three pairs in the course of a long day, according to the records left by Kilsby Jones. Considerable preparations were made for these knitters; all the old oak was well polished, while the old fashioned pewter plates shone like mirrors. A huge fire was made on the hearth, a knarled root of bog timber serving as a nucleus around which was placed a circle of peat. The worker's handiwork was enlivened by telling stories about ghosts, and the Queen of Terror, who was said to appear in the form of a tall yellow-skinned woman, having formidable, prominent front teeth, a foot long, and with long hair trailing to the

ground, with which it was said she swept graves dug with her grinders! In a round pot, furnished with a close fitting lid, suspended by links over the fire was placed a dainty preparation called yellow pudding, which consisted of potatoes – then a rare and by no means a popular edible -mashed so fine that not a single lump would be detected, and to this was added a certain quantity of fine flour and rich milk. All were carefully mixed, and when ready placed in the pot, whose lid had fire placed on it, and then left until properly baked, when the vessel was taken off the fire, the lid removed, and set to cool. Before the party broke up, each knitter had a thick slice of this pudding, and a hasty retreat made for home, for the terrifying stories told of apparitions were largely believed to be true, and the people were very much afraid, and in consequence of the lack of education, singularly superstitious. I hope to give a few other customs in future notes.

JOSHIA J., Cardiff

- **Express 27th February 1913**

TRANSPORTATION - "Inquirer" may be interested in the following:-

"Margaret Jenkins was sentenced at Brecon in 1795 to seven years transportation to Botany Bay". There are many other cases on record, but the cost of transporting prisoners eventually became so expensive, that magistrates found some other mode of punishment. The "cat of nine tails" became a favourite weapon, and 60 strokes seem to have been the usual limit. Prisoners were treated with great barbarity, and were chained together as if they were wild beasts. Women were frequently flogged in public, and one poor creature was in 1787 sentenced at Brecon, for petty larceny, to solitary confinement, with hard labour for three years. The pillory was an institution, and was erected before the Shire Hall, then in High Street. A man was sentenced to be whipped at the carts' tail in Brecon, and to receive 60 lashes, one minute to expire between every lash. This was to take place at noon in the month of January out in the open street; after the punishment, if he survived he was to go into hard labour for twelve months. A woman was publicly whipped, then kept in prison for twelve months, and then whipped again on her release. All the public whippings took place in the High street on market days. For stealing a cock and three hens, a man was sent into transportation for seven years. In 1751 a woman was sentenced by the magistrates at Brecon to be stripped from the waist upwards and then tied to a cart's tail, and so whipped from the gaol (probably in the Struet) to the Usk Bridge, and from thence back again; it was to take place between the hours of twelve and one in the day-time. This punishment was inflicted because the woman stole two shillings of English money. There are other cases of this kind in the Records of Magisterial proceedings in Breconshire. The old "ducking stool" has disappeared, but the "stocks" may still be seen in the entrance to the Guildhall at Brecon.

MARCO II

- **A Christmas Recipe from Brecon, circa 1935**

Another old recipe from the 56-page booklet of recipes published in Brecon between 1933 and 1937. The booklet is the property of BLFHS member Colvin Parry who lives in Somerset. The recipe was submitted by Miss F. Jones.



Many thanks Colvin.

A Good Read

- Ronald Rees: "*The Black Mystery: Coalmining in South West Wales*" published by Y Lolfa (2008).

I borrowed this book from Brecon Library and what a good read it turned out to be. It deals with the coal fields of the western part of South Wales from the Neath valleys to Pembrokeshire. Written in layman's language, it explains the history of the western coal fields, which was quite different from that of Monmouthshire and the rest of the Glamorgan valleys. Life underground is explained, including the causes of accidents and the ways in which the coal was extracted. Reference is made to other industries such as iron and copper. The unique social and cultural life of the coal communities is also explored.

- Rachael Barnwell & Richard Suggett: "*Y Tu Mewn I Gartrefi Cymru/ Inside Welsh Homes*" published by Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Wales (2012)

Also borrowed from Brecon Library, this coffee table sized book uses bilingual text and about 200 photographs to trace the uses and historical changes in dwellings and the rooms within dwellings in Wales, from prehistory to the present. A fascinating book, it uses images from the *National Monuments Record of Wales* collection. Of Breconshire interest are references to Penpont, Treberfydd and a house in Castle Street, Brecon.

NEXT MEETING

No Meeting in December!

Date and time: Wednesday, 8th January 2014 at 2.00pm

Venue: Brecon Library

Subject: "*Curiosities from Brecknock Museum*" by Museum Curator Nigel Blackamore. Unusual items from the Museum Collection.

BLFHS WEBSITE:

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