



Newsletter 45 – July 2015

Welcome to our Newsletter. We invite you to contribute articles, tips, questions and answers for others to share. Feedback is always welcome. Have you missed an edition? Read the archived Newsletters on our website.

July Meeting Review: Outing to Hay on Wye

Twenty-two members and friends gathered for a walk round Hay with umbrellas at the ready. We were split into two groups and set off in different directions, one down to the church and the other up to the castle. Most of us had been to Hay many times before but now, after the tour, we know where the horse fair was held, we recognise the timber framed buildings and can spot the fireman's helmet hanging at first floor level. An hour was certainly not enough time to explore this familiar town with its hidden spaces and long history.

Our host for the tour was the Hay History Group. They now offer a range of guided walks round the town including Hay Castle, so if you want to know what you missed look for Hay Tours on the history group's website <http://hayhistorygroup.co.uk/> or at Hay Cheesemarket in the centre of town.

Related sources:

- <http://www.hay-on-wye.co.uk/tourism/history.asp>
- Fairs, Geoffrey Lowrie, "A History of the Hay: the Story of Hay-on-Wye" Phillimore, 1972

This month on our Website

Since our last Newsletter (published 8 June 2015) we have added/updated the following:

- **Parish Pages:** added Llandewi Abergwesyn pages (including Bishop's Transcripts for baptisms, marriages and burials from 1713 to 1844: <http://www.blfhs.co.uk/members/parishes/index.htm>)
- **Parish Pages:** added transcripts of baptisms in the Brecon Welsh Methodist Circuit 1837 to 1884: <http://www.blfhs.co.uk/members/parishes/index.htm>
- **Aids to Research:** added a guide to *Old Occupations*: <http://www.blfhs.co.uk/members/guides.htm>
- **Newsletter:** added Newsletter 45 (the one you are now reading): <http://www.blfhs.co.uk/members/newsletters.htm>
- **Public News Pages:** updated 19 July <http://www.blfhs.co.uk/news.htm>
- **Members' News Pages:** updated 19 July <http://www.blfhs.co.uk/members/news.htm>

Check the News Pages every few days and the Noticeboard at least weekly.

Help needed! The next parishes being tackled are: Llandewi'r Cwm and Llandefalle.

If you can contribute any photographs or textual material relating to these parishes, or if you wish to report any problems with the website, email our webmaster John Ball at john@jlb2011.co.uk

Brecknock History Week 2015 - Friday 4th to Sunday 13th September

A booklet giving all the details for all county events will be available from mid-August from the Tourist Information Centre and other outlets across the county. We will also make a version available on our website.

This year, the BLFHS's contribution to Brecknock History Week, will be a Pop-Up Museum in St Mary's Church, Brecon, with the theme of schools in Brecon and the surrounding villages. The Pop-Up Museum will be held on Friday 11th and Saturday 12th September.

Did *you* go to school in Brecon? If you or a member of your family have attended school in the Brecon area we would like to hear from you.

We will be collecting memories of going to school in Brecon and the surrounding villages. So many of the school buildings that were used even twenty years ago no longer serve the same function and as we all know, reading and writing are now taught in a different way.

Please come along and tell us about your schooldays, look at photographs and try to name everyone in the pictures, bring your photographs along for us to scan ... and don't forget your school reports if you dare!

We are interested in all kinds of schools. Did you know that in 1878 there was a 'Brecon School for Cookery'. No one around now will have been to that school but what about the *Needlework School* that we believe was in the town in the 1930s?

Our Pop-Up Museum is part of Brecknock History Week but If you cannot come to the Pop-up Museum, please send us your memories and memorabilia so we can display them during the event.

Contact Hilary (see below for contact details).

Education in Breconshire before the 1944 Education Act

I hope that the following timeline will start you thinking about our education-based History Week event. Powys Archives holds school records, although there are strict viewing policies. Visit: <http://www.powys.gov.uk/en/archives/find-archives-local-records/records-held-by-powys-archives/> to find out more.

- **Middle Ages:** Education was provided for the elite by religious institutions. University attendance was available to the lower gentry and attendance at the Inns of Court, London acted as "finishing schools" in networking and estate management.
- 1536–1541: Dissolution of the Monasteries: Christ College established as a Grammar school in 1542 to promote the classics and divinity.
- **1642–1651:** English Civil War: following the end of this period, ten schools were established in Breconshire to spread knowledge of the Gospel, including at Builth, Brecon, Llanddetti, Llangorse, Tal-y-bont, Talgarth, and Tretower.
- **1662:** The Society of the Welsh Trust aimed to evangelize Wales by establishing schools and publishing free copies of the Bible. Supported by the Established Church and Nonconformists, the Society established 300 Trust Schools in Wales, but there were only two in Breconshire – at Brecon and at Hay-on-Wye.
- 1699: The Society for the Propagation of Christian Knowledge (SPCK): continued the work of the Trust. There was therefore an appeal to the clergy and wealthy land owners to help support the education of the poor, and eight schools were opened in Breconshire; three in Brecon, four in the combined Breconshire and Radnorshire parts of Glasbury Parish and one in Llandeilo'r Fan. There was also the Lewis Watkins Free School at Llanigon, and the Mary Herbert School Charity School at Llanbedr. Other charitable donations for schools were from Rees Powell (Vicar of Boughrood) for a school in Brecon (1686); Thomas Pritchard for a school in Builth (1756); Margaret Jones for a school in Llanwrtyd (1783) and David Williams for a school in Cwmdru (1825). [As early as 1624, the Sir John Davey fund had established a school in Defynnog.]
- **1737-1761:** Circulating Schools: Gruffydd Jones of Llanddowror (active 1737-1761), whose patron was Madam Bevan, saw the great need for education to be delivered in the native tongue. He trained teachers who circulated to different districts, staying in each place for about six months and teaching the children and often the adults to read their Welsh Bibles. There were over 150 "schools" of this type in Breconshire. Use was made of farmhouses and outbuildings (e.g. at Maesmawr, Defynnog) or a church (e.g. Capel Nant-ddu, Cantref) to gather together those who wished to learn. These ended with Madam Bevan's' death in 1779.
<http://yba.llgc.org.uk/en/s-JONE-GRI-1683.html>
- **Nonconformist Academies** were set up to educate those who would become the nonconformist preachers and teachers at a time when the Established Church was the only means of religious education. The Academy at Llwynllwyd, near Llanigon was very influential and was where William Williams, Pantycelyn gained his religious education.
<http://daibach-welldigger.blogspot.co.uk/2013/03/the-llanigon-church-family-tree.html>
<http://www.peoplescollection.wales/items/2366>
- **Sunday Schools:** where children and adults could go to learn to read their Bibles, on their one day off in the week. It was also the only venue where they could learn to read in Welsh.
- **Start of 19th Century:** the National Society (Church of England) and the British Society (nonconformist) both determined to improve the access to learning for the bulk of the population. Grants to open day schools were made available by the Government and with Sir Hugh Owen's encouragement, Day schools were gradually set up. By 1846, the British Society had set up four schools in Breconshire – at Brecon, Brynmawr, Talgarth and Ystradgynlais as well as the Brecon Training College. The Calvinistic Methodist College had been opened at Trefeca in 1842

- **1847:** The Blue Books: the State became involved in checking the quality of education in these Day schools and in 1847, a detailed Report was published regarding the state of education in Wales. The verdict was that there were serious problems with the provision of education in Wales. There was an outcry at the findings, which included the remarks of the three non-Welsh speaking Anglican commissioners regarding the Welsh language, nonconformity and the morals of the Welsh people in general. The Report became known as “Brad y Llyfrau Gleision” [The Treachery of the Blue Books]. These can be read at <https://www.llgc.org.uk/collections/digital-gallery/printedmaterial/thebluebooks>
- **1853-1862:** William Roberts, representative of the British Society in South Wales, realised that anger at the Blue Books was not enough. Nonconformists had to accept the State aid offered and he travelled widely in Wales (including Breconshire) to try to persuade the communities to set up schools with this government funding.
- **1881:** another Report showed the state of secondary education in Wales. In Brecon, Christ College had shown recovery following a very bad period at the beginning of the century. Nine private schools in the area were giving secondary education.
- **1876:** school became compulsory for every child under the age of eleven. The age was later raised to 14 years.
- **1889:** all Welsh Counties had to set up secondary schools. The two Brecon County Schools (Boys and Girls) and Builth County School were set up in 1896, while Brynmawr opened in 1897 and Ystradgynlais in 1907. Vaynor and Penderyn secondary school started in 1932.

WW1 Brecon and Radnor Express 6th May 1915

On the 28th ult., Mr and Mrs Thomas Davies of Beilibrith, Upper Chapel, celebrated their Golden Wedding....In 1880 they settled at Beilibrith and lived there ever since. They have brought up a large family, several of whom are scattered in distant quarters of the globe. Two have answered their country's call, and are now serving in their regiments, one Sgt.-Major Roger Davies.. the other Private Tom Davies, of Danyrallt, is quartered in Adeb with the Breckknocks. Two brothers and a sister have settled in the U.S.A., one farming in Montana and the other two dwelling at Boston where they settled down one and a half years ago...

Mr Davies is a staunch Nonconformist... Mrs Davies's brother, Mr Roger Price, was a missionary in South Africa for the lengthy period of 42 years, the latter part of which was spent as a tutor at the Moffat Training Institution in Kuraman. He died in 1900.

You may remember that in Newsletter 19 (February 2013) I published an article entitled “*The Great and the Good*” about Roger Price, also known as the Great Lion of Bechuanaland.

PLEASE NOTE: Venue for our monthly meeting for the remainder of 2015.

As many of you will be aware, the Library services in Powys have been cut back. As a result, Brecon Library is now closed on a Wednesday. Due to our forward booking of the library for the whole of 2015, however, the Staff has agreed to open up for us on the first Wednesday in the month as normal. The library will be opened at 1:15pm and will close at 4:15pm. Please do not expect normal library services during these hours: the library is only opening for our Society Meeting. The main entry and exit points will be the garage area at the side in Bell Lane, using the lift in the far left hand corner. Once in the lift you are now on the Lower ground floor, press for 1st floor to enter the upper floor via the staff office area. **NOTE THESE CHANGES REPLACE THOSE GIVEN PREVIOUSLY.**

NEXT MEETING

Date and time: Wednesday, 5th August 2015 at 2.00 pm.

Venue: Brecon Library

Subject David Martin “*Re-enactment of Medieval Times*”

BLFHS WEBSITE: Our website address: <http://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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