

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



## **Newsletter 48 – October 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.

**October Meeting Review:** Jan Bailey “Llangynidr Mill Digs”. We enjoyed a very interesting illustrated talk by Jan, who is a professional archaeologist. She gave us an insight into the number of mills that were historically located in the Llangynidr area. She showed images of historical maps on which we were able to identify the position of the mills, feeder streams and mill ponds and compare them with modern map and photographic evidence. Volunteers from the local community helped with archaeological digs on the sites of two of the Llangynidr Mills, over a three year period. Through the medium of her slides, Jan showed us the stages of excavation and what had been discovered about the mills and milling industry of Llangynidr. Archaeological finds included domestic items, such as blue and white china. One gruesome result was the discovery of a complete skeleton of a horse in the overgrown mill pond.

### **This month on our Website**

As well as making a few minor adjustments and updates to the website, John has added one new item since the last newsletter:

- **Newsletter:** added Newsletter 48 (the one you are now reading): <http://www.blfhs.co.uk/members/newsletters.htm>
- **Noticeboard:** updated 15 October 2015: <http://www.blfhs.co.uk/noticeboard.htm>
- **Public News Pages:** updated 15 October <http://www.blfhs.co.uk/news.htm>
- **Members' News Pages:** updated 15 October <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 to be tackled are: Llandefalle and Llandeilo'r fân.

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](mailto:john@jlb2011.co.uk)

### **Updates to our Schools project from the Pop Up Museum**

**BLFHS member Sister Bonaventure Kelleher** was very interested in the statement from Susan Morris.

“In about the 1890s, rules had been relaxed and children of non-conformist families were able to attend [the church school at Defynnog]. I came from a non-conformist family and both my parents and I attended Defynnog School.”

Sister Bonaventure explained that when the teaching Nuns came to Brecon, initially the Holy Ghost Sisters from France in 1904, their task was to teach pupils regardless of denomination. Their original teaching base was in a large semi-detached Victorian house in Camden Road.

**BLFHS member Steve Roderick** has drawn our attention to the photograph seen below, sent in last month by member Mary Zorkoczy.

He explained that the photograph probably relates to the “*Pasiant Brycheiniog- A Pageant of Breconshire*”. There was an accompanying book, whose introduction reads:

“During the Festival of Wales in 1958 a Pageant of Breconshire was played by the schools of the county in eight centres – some of the Episodes [plays or scenes] being in Welsh and some in English. The whole Pageant consisted of thirteen Episodes [plays or scenes] as well as an Introduction. These were prepared by Mr T.C. Thomas [1896-1989—see next article] and Mr Horace Morgan [1899-1974, Ystradgynlais born teacher, playwright and Baptist Minister] at the request of the County Education Committee as part of a School Project Scheme.

The Pageant received such a warm welcome in the various centres that the Committee decided that every Episode should be made available in both languages. The task of

translating was entrusted to the teachers of the county. It was also decided to purchase copies of the volume and place these in the Primary and Secondary Schools of the County.”

The book extends to 234 pages and is available for purchase on websites such as Amazon.

**Please let us know if you remember taking part in the  
“Pasiant Brycheiniog/A Pageant of Breconshire”.**



“The year 1958 saw the County of Brecknock celebrating, in manifold ways, the Festival of Wales. In the varied programme, there was one event of great significance and promise for the sponsoring and furthering of interest in the county's history. We refer to the Breconshire Historical Pageant, performed by the pupils of our schools. This Pageant was the outcome of a suggestion, made at a Teachers' Refresher Course in 1957, that the schools should take steps to trace their county's history and present its main features to the inhabitants of Brecknock. The suggestion was taken up with great enthusiasm by the Breconshire Education Committee, the teachers and the pupils, and most helpful and sympathetic support was given by the Ministry of Education and H.M. District Inspector. The bulk of this Pageant of thirteen episodes was written by the Brecon playwright, Mr. T. C. Thomas, whose contributions to the Drama Movement in Wales are so well known. Another stalwart of the Drama, Mr. Horace Morgan, Ystradgynlais, wrote the remaining two episodes, and the production was under the expert guidance of the County Organizers-Mr. Brinley Jenkins, the County Drama Organizer; Mrs. Ogwen Thomas, the County Music Organizer and Mrs. P. Mackintosh, the County Organizer of Physical Education. The whole project fired the imagination of all concerned, and the public performances given by the school children in their respective school districts were grand, thrilling experiences. The very titles of the Pageant's episodes are, in themselves, revealing- The Lake Dwellers of Llangorse Lake: 'The Romans': 'Brychan': 'Cynog': 'The Normans': 'The Death of Llywelyn': 'John Penry': 'Sarah Siddons': 'Camhuanawc': 'The Methodist Revival': 'The Industrial Revolution', and 'The 24th Regiment'. They testify to the prominent role played by Brecknock in our country's history, attracting the invader from the east along its river valleys of the Wye and the Usk, and providing the cradle for some of the most important cultural and religious movements.”

Text taken from the foreword of the Brecknock Society and Museum Friends' journal, “*Brycheiniog*”, Vol. 4 1958.

### **T. C. Thomas 1896-1989**

Born in Merthyr Tydfil, T. C. Thomas became a teacher. He then became Education Officer for the County Council in Brecon. He had a keen interest in amateur dramatics and in the early 1950s helped set up a theatre group known as the Llyn Safaddan Players, for whom he started to write a number of stage plays.

The success of these plays, notably in the British Drama League Festivals, attracted the interest of the BBC who not only broadcast the stage plays on radio and television, but commissioned two six-part television series based on the 'Signalman Davy Jones' play. These were broadcast in 1959, and a second series in 1964. He continued to write for the BBC for some years after this.

T. C. Thomas lived in Llangorse, and died in 1989. A "*Tribute to T. C. Thomas*" was performed by the Brecknock Little Theatre group in 1991.

T. C. Thomas's most well-known plays were "*The Sound of Stillness*" 1952, about the Epynt Clearances, and the series about Davy Jones (1959 and 1964), the comic adventures of a rural railway signalman.

"*The Sound of Stillness*" and the "*Davy Jones*" plays have been popular with amateur dramatic groups such as the Breconshire Young Farmers Clubs. "*The Sound of Stillness*" can still bring tears into the eyes of the audience and the "*Davy Jones*" plays can still provoke laughter.

Thomas could also write in dramatic style, with two New Testament themed plays "*Mirage*" (1964) and "*Lonely Road*" falling into this category.

**Have you acted in or seen any of the plays of T. C. Thomas? Do let us know.**

### **NEXT MEETING**

Date and time: Wednesday, 4<sup>th</sup> November 2015 at 2.00 pm.

Venue: Brecon Library

Subject: Informal gathering of members and supporters, with nibbles. Have you done some personal family, house or local history, or do you have an item, photograph or story which means a lot to you and which you would like to share with us? If you do not want to speak, write a short account (no more than one side of A4) which can be presented on your behalf. Presentations need only be a few minutes in length.

**PLEASE NOTE:** The November meeting will be the final meeting of the year and the last to be held on a Wednesday in Brecon Library. Beginning in January 2016, our meetings will be held on the first Tuesday of the month in Brecon Library at 2.00pm. As this will be during regular library opening hours, access will be via the main entrance, as normal.

**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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