



Breconshire Local & Family History Society (BLFHS)

Cymdeithas Hanes Lleol a Theuluoedd Brycheiniog

Newsletter 59- October 2016

Where there's a Will

As family history researchers we are blessed that our ancestors came from Wales. The National Library of Wales, the guardian of Welsh records, has an amazing collection of documents for which they offer free access via their website. By free I meant that many of these collections have been digitised so that no matter where you are in the UK you can access these images and use them to track and trace your family history.

The large collection of pre 1858 Wills which are held by the library can all be searched and viewed online. As historical documents they are often forgotten as useful signposts to family links but they frequently can open up new avenues to explore as well as confirming links which we believed were relevant. I browse the collection from time to time when doing bits of my family tree. Sometimes looking for a specific person but on many occasions just looking at those from the same village or parish with the same surname on the off chance I would find useful links for my tree. The images are not always easy to read but they do allow us to look before buying. So many times a will is requested only for it to be of little use in the search for our own family histories. Having the opportunity to look at as many as we want to means that it is more likely that any we do purchase will be of great use in our search for our ancestors. Of course no resource should be seen in isolation and the information found in a Will can often be expanded upon and confirmed by looking at other sources such as Baptisms, Marriages and Burial registers and where possible, the Censuses.

The amount of information found within any Will varies although all will contain obvious information such as the name of the testator, the date the Will was made, witnesses' names and the date of death of the testator. Additional to this we may find names of properties, ages of those left bequests and their relationship to the testator. How can this information help us in our family history research?

This month on our website

As well as the regular maintenance tasks to keep our website running smoothly, John has added several new items since the last Newsletter.

Parish Pages

Church/Chapel records for the following parishes have been uploaded: Brecon St John, Brecon St Mary (Plough Chapel), Crickadarn and Gwenddwr
www.blfhs.co.uk/members/parishes/

Monthly Meetings

Minutes of Committee Meeting held 22nd September.
www.blfhs.co.uk/members/minutes.htm

Monthly Meeting Report for October. Audio-recording and slide show on Brecon's WW1 Flying Ace (speaker Jo Copping)
Brecon 1901 Project. Update by Helen Ball including 1901 Quiz Sheet.
www.blfhs.co.uk/members/meetings/161004.htm

Newsletter

Newsletter 59 (the one you are now reading)
www.blfhs.co.uk/members/newsletters.htm

Members' News Pages

[Updated 20 October 2016]
www.blfhs.co.uk/members/news.htm

Public News Pages

[Updated 20 October 2016]
www.blfhs.co.uk/news.htm

Noticeboard

Updated 10 October 2016 with details of the launch of the Brecon 1901 Project and details of the November monthly meeting.
www.blfhs.co.uk/noticeboard.htm

Don't forget! Check the News Pages every few days and the Noticeboard at least weekly.

I have found a couple of interesting Wills which will help to illustrate how much use they can be. The first is the Will of Thomas Prosser of Llanfihangel Tal y Llyn whose Will is dated 1661 and the second is for Joan Prosser, also of Llanfihangel Tal y Llyn, whose Will is dated 1847. Cross checking this date with the burial records for Llanfihangel Tal y Llyn tells us that Joan was 84 when she died so we can begin to speculate about her parentage and who she married.

Names and relationships

Joan Prosser left bequests to a number of different people none of whom carried the surname Prosser. The first issue is why there are no Prosser bequests and who are the people that she did leave legacies to? Joan's bequests are to individuals with the surname Morris but there is nothing in the Will to tell us what her connection to this surname is although we might speculate that perhaps she was a Morris before she was married because there is a reference to her "*late nephew Watkin Morris*".

If we did not know it already I would therefore undertake a search of the marriage records to confirm what Joan's maiden name was. A search does reveal a marriage between a Joan Morris and a William Prosser at Llanfihangel Tal y Llyn in October 1800 and further checking of the burial registers and MIs for Llanfihangel confirm this is the right couple.

In memory of William PROSSER of this parish
who died Jan 4th 1822 aged 52 years. Also in
memory of Joan wife of the said W PROSSER
who died Sept 8th 1847 aged 84

We still do not know the precise relationships between her and those she left her wealth to, but we can speculate that the links are familial.

Other people named she left bequests to are;

"Mary Morris, wife of John of Pencaemain in the Parish of Llangorse..."
"my nephew Thomas Morris Cooper Crickhowell"

"Thomas eldest son of my late nephew Watkin Morris..."
"Watkin second son now living of the said Watkin Morris..."
"John Morris third son now living of the said Watkin Morris..."
"William Morris fourth son now living of the said Watkin Morris..."

There are plenty of possibilities here to help find out how each of these are related to or linked with Joan. Two nephews, one deceased, a singular name without a status [could he be another nephew?] and a group of boys who are the sons of her deceased nephew. Baptism, marriage and burial records will be of great use here as will the 1841 Census given that Joan made her Will in 1842.

Whilst the relationships in Joan's Will are not so clearly defined some Wills do record family relationships more directly. The Will of Thomas Prosser also of Llanfihangel Tal y Llyn, who died in 1661 lists bequests to his various children and their families. From this we learn a great deal as he specifies not only the forenames of his children but where married, their married name and the names of their husbands.

"I give and bequeath to my daughter Mawde the wife of Richard Watkin"
"Also I give and bequeath to my son in law W[illia]m Morgan..."
"I give ...unto Jane my daughter the wid of W[illia]m Howell..."

He also mentions his grandchildren

"bequeath unto my grandchild Andrew ye son of William Morgan aforesaid..."

"grandchild Margaret daughter to the said W[illia]m Howell..."

I have not listed all the names but the examples above offer clues which, if supplemented by searching other resources such as birth marriage and death records, can help to map out more parts of the family tree.

Places and Properties

As well as the names of those receiving bequests the places in which they live or the properties they live in can also help to confirm who individuals are. In some families a specific property can be a constant and as such can often help to track a family back and forward in time.

In Joan Prosser's Will we learn of two properties; Pencaemain and Velin y coed. Her Will was dated 1842 so we are fortunate that those mentioned are very likely to be listed in the Census of 1841 and because there are likely to be many John and Mary Morris's, the additional clue of a property name goes to help pin down the right couple. Not only this, if we can find them on the Census we can find out more about their ages, where they came from and who else was living in the property with them. To further inform this point I tracked John and Mary through the Censuses up until John's death in 1857. He too left a Will and in this Will he is noted as a Freeholder which made me wonder whether the property Pencaemain had been passed to him from maybe his father. A quick search of the Wills for anyone with the surname Morris

and living in Llangorse produced three options; John himself, Evan Morris died 1847 and Benjamin Morris died 1821. Benjamin's being the earliest was the most likely and indeed it transpired that Benjamin was John's father and had passed Peny cae Main [as spelt in the Will] to him and his heirs. His Will also told us that John was already living at the property at the time Benjamin had written his Will. Is this latter fact useful? Maybe not initially but its value may be revealed at a later point in time.

Searching using the names of properties can be therefore be very fruitful and I would do the same with Watkin Morris of Velin y coed, Llanbedr. We may not necessarily be closer to knowing precise relationships but each small piece of information can help to fill in the picture.

Brecon 1901 Project

As the Brecon 1901 Project gets off the ground here is a short quiz by Helen Ball to entice you to get involved if you can. Answers will be in the next Newsletter.

- 1. What was the "old head" that appeared almost to everyone in Brecon in 1901?*
- 2. To the nearest 500, what was the population of Brecon in 1901?*
- 3. What new school building opened in Brecon in 1901?*
- 4. Who was the Mayor of Brecon in 1901?*
- 5. Where was the 'Tommy Jones Memorial' obelisk located in 1901?*
- 6. What was 'Dinas House' and where was it located?*
- 7. What well known person and official in Brecon died in the same month as Queen Victoria?*
- 8. What was the name of one of the Railway Companies in Brecon in 1901?*
- 9. What hotel was sold in Brecon in 1901?*
- 10. What British Regiment was resident in the Brecon Barracks in 1901?*

Occupations

One of the difficulties with families is that they often use the same first names for their children and this can become confusing when seeking to relate one to another. When so many people have the same name it can be useful if an occupation is mentioned alongside their name. This can help to confirm which might be the person sought. In Joan Prosser's Will she mentions three people called Watkin Morris. Watkin Morris of Velin y coed, Watkin Morris her "late nephew" and Watkin Morris "second son now living..."

Watkin Morris deceased and Watkin Morris second son are related but who is the Watkin Morris of Velin y coed and how can he be distinguished from the other two?

In the 1841 Census Watkin Morris of Velin y Coed is noted as a Miller aged 40 yrs old. Is there any way of finding out the occupation of Watkin Morris deceased? Sometimes baptism records will show this fact and it is always worth a look to see if this is the case. Because we know that Watkin Morris deceased had four children and the order in which they were born we can look for a group of baptisms which fulfil this pattern. There are baptisms for three of the children. The register does not begin early enough to record the first child, Thomas, but a baptism for Watkin Morris took place at Danycastle Chapel Crickhowell on December 17th 1813 to parents Watkin Morris *Cooper* and Margaret Morris née Beavan. So it would seem that Joan's deceased nephew was a Cooper and not a Miller and therefore the two Watkin Morris's are likely to be different people.

Dates

The date on which a Will is written and witnessed can help to inform us about those mentioned in the Will as the element of time can assist in confirming or not confirming a fact relating to them. Joan's Will mentions her deceased nephew Watkin Morris. We know nothing about him except these facts:

That he died before 1842 [Joan refers to him as deceased and her Will was written in 1842]

That he was old enough to have fathered four children [the names of which are given in Joan's Will]

And that the children were born in the following order:

"Thomas eldest son of my late nephew Watkin Morris.."

"Watkin second son now living of the said Watkin Morris.."

"John Morris third son now living of the said Watkin Morris.."

"William Morris fourth son now living of the said Watkin Morris..."

With this information we have a reasonable chance of finding out more information about who Watkin Morris might have been. If we look for a group of baptisms for children with the names of Thomas, Watkin, John and William all born to the same father and in the order determined above we may be able to make a reasonable assumption that this is the right Watkin. If we are luckier the baptism records will also show the mother's name which will enable a search for a marriage. As already covered in Occupations above we know that the three of the four children were born to Watkin Morris and Margaret Beavan between 1813 and 1818 at Crickhowell and that it is possible that the marriage between Watkin and Margaret likely took place around this time. In fact they married at Llangattock in 1805.

There are many other clues in a Will which can help the researcher and I have mentioned only a few. Whilst they may help to better inform the researcher about who a person is or how they are related to the testator it does not always follow that the information found will move the tree forward or backward – that would be too easy! But Wills still

Remember...

Comments on this Newsletter are very welcome. I would love to receive more and also would be very pleased to receive interesting snippets of information for inclusion in the Newsletter. If you have anything specific to the **1901 Project** please do let me know. You can email it me, Sue Ashton at editorblfhs@outlook.com

remain a very useful resource when undertaking family history research and given our free access to them via the National Library of Wales website should be utilised whenever possible.

For access to this valuable resource copy and paste this link into your browser

<https://www.llgc.org.uk/index.php?id=6838>

Call for interesting article subjects!!!!

I am looking for interesting subjects on which to base the monthly article. If you are passionate about a subject which you think would be interesting to our members please let me know by sending me an email at the usual address editorblfhs@outlook.com



Free Online Resources

There are lots of free resources out there on the Internet. Copy and paste the web addresses into your browser.

Cynefin Project

The National Library of Wales has been undertaking a huge project to put all the tithe maps for Wales onto a website so creating an online resource which can be freely accessed. The website is due to go live in March 2017 but it is well worth a look now. All webpages are available in English or Welsh.

Search for “cynefin.wales” or copy and paste the following link into your browser cynefin.archiveswales.org.uk/
At present the project is still under development and the schedules for the tithe maps are still being transcribed by over 900 volunteers across Wales. This means that some tithe maps have not been completed and some facilities on the webpage are not yet available. However it is fun to play with now!

- Search for “cynefin.wales”
- The web page “cynefin.archiveswales.org.uk” will come up
- Select “Tithe maps” from the list along the top of the page
- Select “Brecknock” (or another county) from the list on the left-hand side
- Run down the list that now appears and select a parish. The items shown are the work being done by volunteers to Transcribe, Georeference and Visualize the maps. Try clicking on one and just play around.

Eventually, you will be able to have the tithe map and the modern OS map side by side or overlaying one over the other. When overlaying it will be possible to fade in/out one of the maps in favour of the other to highlight features which interest you.

As all the information from the tithe schedules is being entered into the site eventually it will be possible to search for a personal name, a field name, a house name or feature such as all arable fields. This should be available from March onwards but I am sure they will announce the launch of the site in the press.

The latest information from the project is an image showing progress of how the historic tithe maps of Wales will be linked together to create a unified tithe map of Wales.

Alison Noble



October Meeting Review: Brecon's WWI Flying Ace. 4th October 2016

Jo Copping gave an illustrated talk about her Brecon-born great uncle, Richard Aveline Maybery, an ace pilot in the Great War of 1914-1918.

She began by giving a brief introduction to her Maybery family who had been involved in the iron industry in Worcestershire. In 1753 Thomas Maybery acquired the Brecon furnace and Pipton forge for his son, John Maybery. This was the beginning of the family's connection with Brecon and the Brecon area. For more information about the history of the family see <https://archives.library.wales/index.php/maybery-family-of-breconshire>.

Jo's Great Uncle, Richard Aveline Maybery [1895-1917], went to Sandhurst and on graduation in 1913 was commissioned as a second lieutenant in the 21st (Empress of India's) Lancers and served in India. Following an injury which left him unable to ride a horse he became an observer and then a pilot for the Royal Flying Corps. His career was short, only lasting from October 1916 to December 1917, but his ability to fly and attack enemy aircraft led to him being awarded two Military Crosses and he became one of the few flying aces of WWI. He was eventually shot down by the Germans on 19th December 1917 just days after receiving his second Military Cross. Initially interred by the Germans, after the war his remains were reburied in Flesquieres Hill British Cemetery, Nord, France.

For more details see his entry on Wikipedia. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Richard_Maybery



Website

Our website address is www.blfhs.co.uk

Next Meeting

Date/Time: Tuesday 1st November. 2pm

Place: Brecon Library

Subject: "Show and Tell" afternoon

This meeting will be open for members (and friends) to bring along items and stories they have discovered in their family history. If you are worried about talking to the whole group, have a chat to our Chair who will be pleased to help you.

Remember....

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