This month on our website
Just a reminder

Update: The new website is coming along but is not yet ready for launch.

Members continue to be able to access the current website as normal but as reported previously, no new items will be placed on it, no old items will be removed, and no amendments will be made. When the new website is up and running, visitors will be able to access old and new data as before. Access to the member's section of the new website will require a different username and password from the ones currently in use; members will be informed about this in time for the launch. I hope that everyone understands the need for this change and will bear with us until every section of our website has been converted to the new CMS website platform.

I was named for my mother's mother: naming patterns as a tool in determining ancestry

1st son named after the father's father
2nd son named after the mother's father
3rd son named after the father
4th son named after the father's oldest brother
5th son named after father's second oldest brother or mother's oldest brother

1st daughter named after the mother's mother
2nd daughter named after the father's mother
3rd daughter named after the mother
4th daughter named after the mother's oldest sister
5th daughter named after the mother's second oldest sister or father's oldest sister

How much might we rely on such a convention when researching our ancestry? Perhaps with the availability of the censuses such a convention may cease to have relevance but prior to 1841 what tools do we have to enable us to further research our ancestry. If the naming convention can be taken as a reliable method of determining the names of our ancestors should we give it more weight or should it be considered just one tool which may or may not help?

I decided to put this to the test and randomly selected families with a reasonable number of children and began to research their ancestry.

In 1861 Thomas and Eliza Powell are residing at The Blue Boar, Watton, Brecknock St John. They have eight children living with them; Sarah, Margaret, Thomas, William, John. Eliza[beth], Mary and Maria. A further child, Abel, is recorded in the 1851 Census and a baptism and burial is recorded in 1852/53 for another son, Henry.

The birth years in the Census are somewhat unreliable but their baptisms at Brecon St John show that there were very few gaps between the children suggesting that no more died between the Censuses of 1851 and 1861. The baptism records also record that some of the children were given more than one name. Sarah was

Sarah Margaret, Eliza[beth] was Eliza[beth Jane, Thomas was Thomas William, William was William John, Abel was Abel Vaughan, Mary was Mary Emily and Maria was Maria Gwenllian.

Thomas Powell was a maltster and Innkeeper as was his father and his grandfather before him. He married Eliza Evans in 1840 at Brecon St John with their first child, Sarah, arriving the following year. The marriage register records that Thomas's father was Abel Powell, an Innkeeper and that Eliza's was William Evans, a farmer. Researching further back we can determine that Abel's father was also Abel who married Mary [marriage not found] and that Abel Snr [b. 1735] was the child of David and Elizabeth Powell. David and Elizabeth had four known children; Abel [b.1735], William [b.1737], Watkin [b.1840] and David [b.1743]. In the pattern David's first son would be named after his paternal grandfather and his second son after his maternal grandfather. As we do not know this information the first element of the pattern we can check is that he has named his third son after himself. On first look this does not seem to be the case but there is a gap of three years between the second and third son so it's possible that there was another child who they named David but who died after the birth of Watkin. The next child born could then be named after his father even though it broke the pattern. Would this matter? David and Elizabeth do not seem to have had any girls so we can't look at this element of the pattern.

David's child Abel married Mary and had three children that we know of; Abel [b.1763], Mary [b.1765] and Ann [b.1766]. Not enough to test out the pattern thoroughly but we can already see that the first child is not named after the paternal grandfather, David, but after the father. The next child, a daughter Mary, is also not named after her maternal grandmother, Elizabeth, but after her mother, Mary. We do not know who Ann is named for. From this rather scant evidence can we say that naming patterns were somewhat loosely applied and that what was more important was that specific names were maintained depending on perhaps the strength of a family relationship? Was the relationship between Abel and his parents a good one? He named one son David, although not within the confines of the pattern, but does not seem to have chosen to name any of his girls after his mother.

The next generation offers more useful evidence to potentially support the pattern. Abel and Mary's son Abel married Margaret Vaughan in 1802 at Llandefalle. Abel and Margaret had seven children that we know of; Maria, John, Ann, Abel, Ann, Thomas and Margaret. The first daughter is not named after any known relative and neither is the first son, John. The second son, Abel, is named for the father or paternal grandfather rather than the maternal grandfather and the third son, Thomas, is potentially named after his mother's brother rather than his father. On the female side the first daughter is not named for the maternal grandmother except that Maria might be considered an alternative to Mary and the second and third daughters, Ann and Ann, are not named for either the paternal grandmother or the maternal grandmother but rather the father's eldest sister. What can we deduce from this? That the choice of forenames may not always follow the naming pattern but are usually chosen from a pool of names already found within the family generations.

We now find ourselves back with Thomas and Eliza at their inn, the Blue Boar. They had nine children that have been accounted for. Their first son was Abel and he certainly was given the same name as his paternal grandfather. Their second son, Thomas William was not named directly after his maternal grandfather, William, but rather his name was used as a second forename. Their third son, William John was not named after his father nor was their fourth son, Henry named after any known relative. With their girls the pattern is also not adhered to although their third daughter is named for her mother, Eliza[beth]. Once again we see that certain forenames are carried on in the family but not necessarily within the naming pattern. A new development is the use of the mother's maiden name as a second forename as we see with Abel Vaughan.
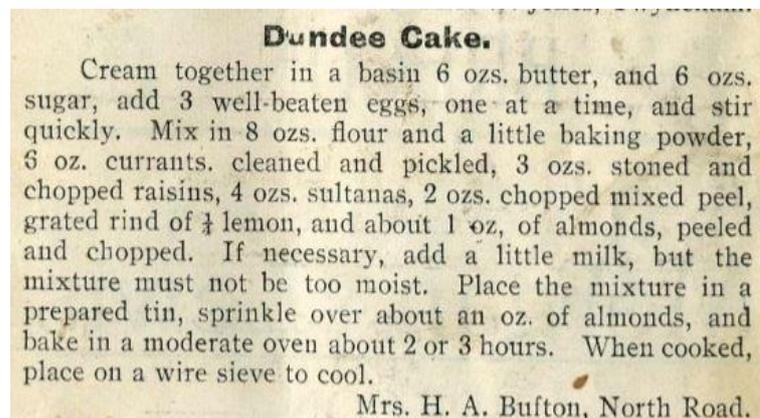
This can be a very useful mechanism when searching for marriages and although not fool-proof if a strange name occurs its worth considering whether this might be a clue to an ancestor's maiden name.

In my own ancestry I find that rather than naming patterns being adhered to certain names do crop up regularly enough to suggest that there may be links between families. My three times maternal great grandfather was Roger Prosser and his wife was Margaret [Havard]. He was born in 1753 and died in 1854, a great age and genetically long life is something which I find throughout my maternal line. I am not sure of his father's name but records suggest that he was the son of John and Margaret Prosser of Aberyscir. They are buried in the churchyard there along with one David Prosser who may be their son. Roger Prosser Snr had seven children the eldest son being John [b.1796] and the eldest daughter being Elizabeth [b. 1799]. By the naming pattern John should be named after his paternal grandfather and if we believe this to be John of Aberyscir then the pattern is maintained. Elizabeth being their first daughter should be named after her maternal grandmother and again this follows through as Margaret's mother was Elizabeth [surname unknown]. However, the pattern now begins to break down as the second son should be named Benjamin after his maternal grandfather, the third son after his father Roger and the fourth son after his father's eldest brother. If we believe that the David buried at Aberyscir might be a brother of Roger could we say that whilst the naming pattern is slightly skewed there are sufficient hints to suggest that we can link this person to the previous generation?

Although Roger and Margaret did not use the name Benjamin it does appear in the family tree at regular intervals and within other Prosser households perhaps suggestive of familial links. Roger's son Roger married Ann Price in 1832 and they had four children; John, William, Thomas and Margaret. None of the children's names follow the naming pattern. Their first son is not named for his paternal grandfather and as far as we know their second son is not named after his maternal grandfather although as we do not know much about Ann's family this can't be verified except to say that it is believed her parents were Thomas and Ann Jones of Upper Chapel. Thomas their third son might be named for his maternal grandfather

IT'S NEARLY CHRISTMAS TIME!!!

More timely recipes from that wonderful old cookery book published around the period before the Second World War. The recipes appear to have been sent in by various people in the area. Thanks to Colvin Parry for allowing us to reproduce parts of it.

Dundee Cake.

Cream together in a basin 6 ozs. butter, and 6 ozs. sugar, add 3 well-beaten eggs, one at a time, and stir quickly. Mix in 8 ozs. flour and a little baking powder, 6 oz. currants. cleaned and pickled, 3 ozs. stoned and chopped raisins, 4 ozs. sultanas, 2 ozs. chopped mixed peel, grated rind of ¼ lemon, and about 1 oz. of almonds, peeled and chopped. If necessary, add a little milk, but the mixture must not be too moist. Place the mixture in a prepared tin, sprinkle over about an oz. of almonds, and bake in a moderate oven about 2 or 3 hours. When cooked, place on a wire sieve to cool.

Mrs. H. A. Bufton, North Road.

or for his father's brother. Margaret, their only daughter is most likely named after her paternal grandmother Margaret Havard rather than as the pattern suggests, her maternal grandmother. Once again, although the naming pattern is not adhered to what is obvious is that the same forenames crop up generation to generation with the addition of the odd new name. My grandmother's siblings included the expected family names of Margaret, Ann, Thomas, William John and Roger with the sudden addition of the name Rosina – where did this come from? Was it chosen by a sibling or other relative or was it just a name which was popular at the time. Whatever the reason because it was a little unusual I did find it helpful in pulling together some of the disparate strands of my recent family history.

So where does this leave us in terms of the value of the naming pattern in genealogy? I would say that it has limited value in the sense that it cannot be relied upon but where there are many occurrences of the same forenames, particularly when they are unusual such as with Benjamin, Abel and Roger that there may well be family links and further research into these would be warranted. My research was necessarily brief and what I discovered does not mean that other families did not adhere to the naming pattern but as with all things genealogical every piece of information must be checked and proved so even if a family seems to follow the pattern there still must be some form of proof to show that the links between the generations are correct.

And another one……

Mincemeat.

Ingredients :—1 lb. each raisins, sultanas, currants; 2 lbs. apples, ¼ lb. mixed peel, 1 teasp. each ground ginger, cinnamon, nutmeg; ½ teasp. spice, ¼lb. chopped almonds; 1 lb. brown sugar; 1 lb. chopped suet; 1 teasp. salt; juice and grated rind of 2 lemons and 2 oranges; ½ pt. brandy and sherry (optional).

Method :—Mince and mix well together, put in jars and cover.

Miss F. Prosser, Tygwyn.

Free Online Resources

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

Breconshire Local and Family History Society: Maps of Breconshire

A reminder that on our own website there are links to many Breconshire maps including John Speed's 1610 map of Breconshire and of Brecon town. Meredith Jones' map of Brecon 1744. County maps of 1804, 1816 and Ordnance Survey map of 1830

http://www.blfhs.co.uk/members/mem-maps.htm

A gazetteer of markets and fairs in England and Wales to 1516.

A fascinating study of the many markets and fairs which existed in medieval England and Wales.

http://www.history.ac.uk/cmh/gaz/gazweb1.html

Brecon Isolation Hospital

Before the first use of antibiotics in the 1940s, simple infections could kill. Patients had to be isolated either at home or in Isolation Hospitals for the sake of the rest of the community.

Brecon had its own Isolation Hospital just off Warren Road, of which nothing remains today.

In 1902, Brecon Town Council discussed building an isolation hospital on the edge of the town.

By that summer, there was an outbreak of Smallpox in the town and a canvas isolation hospital was temporarily erected off Warren Road.

For ten years, there were no patients sent to the Isolation Hospital, until in 1913, there was an outbreak of Diphtheria and the facility was re-opened. Major improvements were made to the buildings and an advert was posted for a permanent female caretaker.

The site had apparently consisted of a number of buildings built from galvanised iron around a wooden structure. Conditions inside must have been primitive and grim. Providing water and sanitation to the site was also problematic.

The facility probably ceased to be used in the 1930s.

The map is taken from the 1952 Ordnance Survey Map.

Further research:
- "Brecon Isolation Hospital" by Michael Jones, in "Brycheiniog" 2012
- Local newspapers online at http://newspapers.library.wales/ and on microfilm at Brecon Library.

Some Welsh Christmas Customs

The Christmas Feast

For most the Christmas roast will be a turkey or perhaps a chicken but in rural Wales it was commonplace to have goose, usually fattened up on the surplus grain from the harvest. My grandmother certainly did and my grandfather would have been horrified to have anything else. During the Second World War when goose was not so available they would have had a capon. Here is an unusual way of serving the bird; as a rich cawl. The bird would be cooked slowly and enriched with the flavour of oats and onions. When the meat fell off the bones it would be served with lots of buttery mashed potato. The oats and onions thickening the gravy. I am not sure where the fat from the goose would go – into the cawl I expect, making it very greasy but warming for those cold winter nights.

Plygain Service

The Plygain is a traditional Welsh Christmas morning service which usually takes place in church between three and six o' clock in the morning. It is the only church service which takes place at night and is accompanied by a procession to the church by candlelight.

The word "plygain" is believed to come from the Latin word "pullicantio"meaning "when the cock crows at dawn" or from "plygu" meaning to "bend forward in prayer" and is first mentioned in the Black Book of Carmarthen in early 13th century Wales. The carols are different from the usual Christmas songs in that each song also contains verses about the Crucifixion and the Resurrection of Christ.

The National Library of Wales records that in Llanfyllin, a relatively rural area, the torches were replaced by candles, made by local chandlers and termed *canhwyllau plygain* ('Plygain Candles'). This was the case at many rural churches, as they would have no facilities for night-time services, so each person would often bring a candle themselves to help light the church during the hours of darkness. When they arrived at the church, it was lit with hundreds of candles placed only a couple of inches apart, making for a "brilliant" display. This sort of display was apparently a key part of many local plygain ceremonies, as it left a strong impression in the written records that remain.

Hunting the house wren

Not something we would wish to see today but in 19th century Wales groups of men would go "Hunting the Wren" on Twelfth Night. The bird would be caged in a wooden box and carried door to door for everyone to see. Poor wren!

The Mari Lwyd

A tradition mainly found in South Wales the Mari Lwyd was the name given to a hobby horse made with a decorated horse's skull which was used as part of a New Year's Eve tradition in 19th century Wales. The skull would be decorated with bells and draped in a white sheet before being placed on top of a wooden pole. The figure would then be carried from door to door by a group challenging the householders to a battle of Welsh verse. Eventually one side would relent and the householders would invite the group in for food and drink.

Holming

In early 19th century Wales there was a painful ritual called "holming". The last person to get out of bed on the day after Christmas morning was beaten with a holly sprig!

Interestingly enough Hunt the Wren is a tradition also found on the Isle of Man.

The children would take their stuffed wren in a cage around the Island singing accompanied by singing. John Ball who has Manx ancestry tells us that his gran knew all the words that children sang when they paraded round the neighbourhood with their caged (toy) wren. Here is a link to the history of the Manx version and the words of the song.

http://www.isle-of-man.com/manxnotebook/manxsoc/msvol16/p151.htm

As this is the last newsletter of 2017 I would like to wish everyone a

Very Happy Christmas and a Blessed New Year

Nadolig hapus iawn a blwyddyn newydd bendigedig

Don't forget – I am always looking for interesting article subjects so let me know if you have anything you would like to share!!!!

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

Website
Our website address is www.blfhs.co.uk

Next Meeting

Date/Time: Tuesday 2nd January 2018 2pm

Place: Brecon Public Library

Subject: Abandoned Dwellings of the Black Mountains
                 Robert Gant has researched this area and will speak of these lost communities.