



Breconshire Local & Family History Society (BLFHS)

Cymdeithas Hanes Lleol a Theuluoedd Brycheiniog

Newsletter 72 - January 2018

Wishing all our Members a Happy New Year

Breconshire Convicts and their Transportation

Between 1788 and 1868 nearly 164,000 convicts were transported to Australia. Prior to this most convicts had been sent to North America or the West Indies. With the coming of the American Revolution transportation to North America was no longer viable so the government had to look at alternative locations. The result of this delay was that many prisoners had to be held in gaol prior to their sentence of transportation being carried out. The gaols soon became overcrowded so the overflow of prisoners were held in derelict ships known as Hulks which were moored in coastal waters. Sending convicts abroad meant a steady source of labour available to work on building the necessary infrastructures to these new colonies such as roads, bridges and public buildings. Not all convicts were therefore locked up but were put to work, work being seen as a productive route to rehabilitation. However, there still existed the punishments of being locked in irons, made to work 14hr days or the lash.

There are many records available online to trace your convict ancestors but the completeness of each one varies. Some are free but others require a subscription in order to access the information held.

By 1852 it was estimated that approximately 1,800 convicts had been sentenced in Wales to transportation; about 1% of the total number of convicts sentenced at this time. Many of them only spoke Welsh so not only had they been transported half way around the world to a life of hard labour but often they could not converse with their fellow convicts because they did not share a common language.

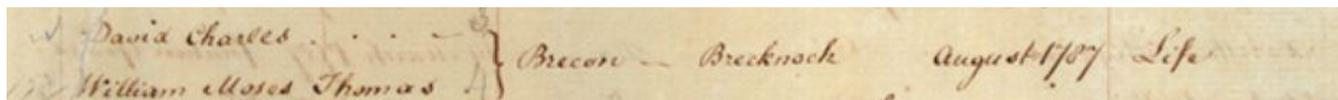
Between 1787 and 1791 three fleets sent to Australia. The first fleet of eleven ships set sail from Plymouth on 13th May 1787 and arrived in Botany Bay on 18th January 1788. This site was found unsuitable and so the fleet relocated to Port Jackson where on 26th January 1788 the ship disembarked some 700 or so convicts in what is now known as Sydney Harbour. There were approximately 180 women on the ship and 48 deaths reported en-route. Records report that of the total number transported on the 1st fleet six had been sentenced in Wales; 4 men and 2 women. The identities of these are difficult to determine from the lists available as no single list of those transported exists. One man identified was William Davis who was tried at Brecon in 1785 and sentenced to transportation for life. He is not found in the NLW Crime and Punishment data-base^[1] but it's likely that his crime was one of theft. He left on the *Alexander* in May 1787 aged approximately 23 and was described as a baker by trade.^[2] Ann Morgan sentenced at Brecon in 1786 for Larceny was transported for 7yrs to Van Diemen's Land and gained her freedom in 1832.^[3] Much of the information about the convicts has had to be compiled from a variety of primary and secondary sources but the information is likely still to be incomplete with many inaccuracies.

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.

Of those Welsh arriving on the second fleet we have slightly more information. The database of convict indents held by the University of New South Wales informs us of two men on the second fleet were David Charles sentenced at Brecon in August 1787 and William Moses Thomas sentenced at the same time.^[4]

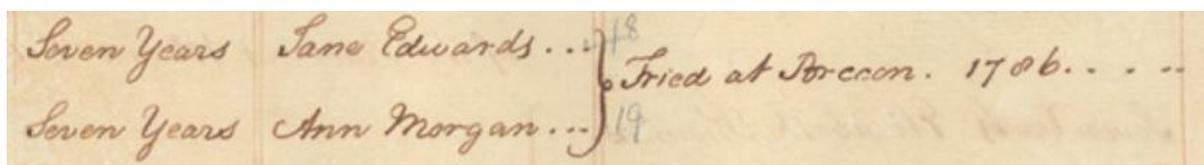


Early Convict Index. Univ. NSW.^[5]

The Crime and Punishment database on the National Library of Wales site gives more information about David Charles. He was around 52yrs old and was sentenced for sheep stealing. His initial sentence was Death but as often happened this was commuted to transportation for life. He left on the ship *Neptune* along with William Moses Thomas.

William Moses Thomas alias William Moses was around 21yrs old and was convicted of stealing a horse. He was initially sentenced to death but this was commuted to transportation for life.

According to the Early Convicts Index it is possible that Ann Morgan and Jane Edwards were the first two Welsh women to be sent to Australia. The index suggests they were transported aboard one of the ships in the First Fleet. Both had been sentenced to 7yrs.



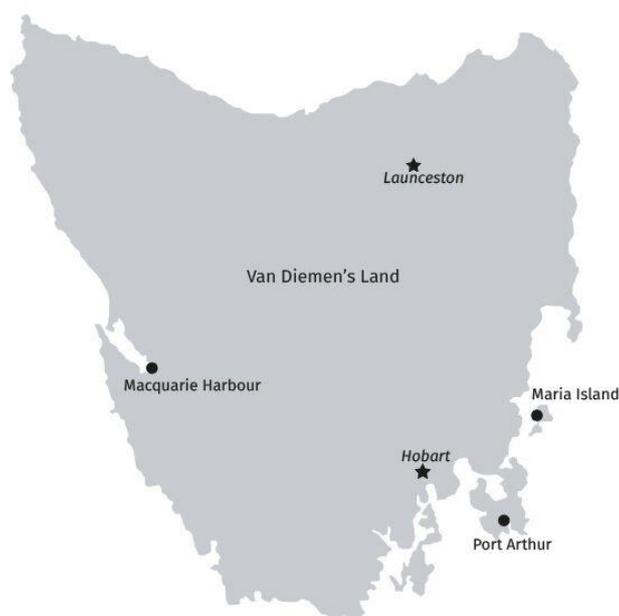
Catherine Williams was convicted of sheep stealing in 1789. She was a widow from Llangyndir and left aboard the ship *Mary Ann* which was part of the third fleet and which arrived in NSW October 1791. The record has her listed as Cathleen but it's likely that they were one and the same as the place and date of trial are the same.^[6]

The crimes committed by the convicts were largely larcenous, either the theft of livestock such as sheep, cattle or horses or clothing and wearing apparel. Whilst there were convictions for serious crimes of assault and murder these were far outweighed by the variety of larcenous offences committed.^[7] John Lewis alias John Simon and Magdalen Lewis alias Maudlin Lewis were both convicted for sheep stealing. Magdalen was transported for 7yrs but John only escaped death by being transported for 14yrs.^[8]

Ann Pugh of Merthyr Cynog was convicted of the theft of a sheep at Brecon on 7th September 1819 and sentenced to transportation for life. She left on the ship *Morley* in May 1820.^[9] Walter Griffith also of Merthyr Cynog and also convicted of the theft of sheep was found guilty to the value of 9d and given the death sentence but this was commuted to transportation for 14yrs.^[10]

Until the 1820's most women were sent to New South Wales with just a few to Van Diemen's Land. After 1840 the numbers sent to Van Diemen's Land (present day Tasmania), increased after an order ending transportation to NSW was signed. Approximately 40% of all convicts were transported to Van Diemen's Land until the practice ended in 1853. Between 1816 and 1844 the Female Convicts in Van Diemen's Land Database has detailed records for eight women all who were sentenced at Brecon and transported for 7years each. All of them were convicted of varying elements of larceny, usually food or clothing. In 1816 Ann Morgan was brought before the Great Session at Brecon and sentenced to 7yrs transportation for stealing. She was first shipped to Sydney on the ship *Friendship* on 3rd July 1817. The ship arrived on 14th January 1818 and at the end of the same month she was further transported on to Van Diemen's Land arriving on 20th of February 1818. It must have been a long and arduous journey even though at 30 she was older than many of the other women. There is little other information about her experiences except that she was granted her Certificate of Freedom on 6th September 1823; some two years before her official sentence was to end so perhaps her demeanour and attitude was such that she was rewarded early. Good behaviour meant that convicts could be released from their sentence early. The Ticket of Leave system enabled them to work for themselves but still with some supervisory control, much like probation. Not only was this good for the prisoner it also meant that the cost to the government was reduced. The Conditional Pardon which often followed on from the Ticket of Leave freed the

convict provided they did not return to England. An Absolute Pardon freed them and allowed them to return to England if they so wished. The certificate of freedom was given to a convict at the end of their sentence.^[11]



Laura Vann © www.convictvoyages.org (2015)

In 1832 Ann Griffiths was convicted at Brecon for stealing poultry. She is reported as being of bad character with a sallow complexion. She became free in 1839 at the end of her 7yr sentence. Eliza Williams was sent to Van Diemen's Land on the ship *Jane* in 1833. She was a farm servant of around 23 years old with red hair and a slight frame. She already had three children but left two of them behind. Despite not being free many of the convicts were granted permission to marry and Eliza married William Carver in 1834. He was a convict who

came over on the ship *Asia 2*. Eliza was granted her Certificate of Freedom in 1839 and lived until she was 96yrs sadly dying as a pauper in the New Town Charitable Institute at Hobart in 1899. Catherine Lewis who was born to parents Rees Lewis and Magdalen Jones and baptised in 1803 at Llanafanfawr^[12] was convicted at the Brecon Quarter Sessions on 14th October 1844 for larceny; stealing wood. She had many previous convictions mainly for stealing clothing or food. She had three children to support and no husband so perhaps her actions resulted from desperation. She was transported for 7yrs on the ship *Tory* and the reports from her pre-transportation incarceration report her as insolent. This attitude continued when she reached Hobart and she was frequently punished with periods of hard labour in the Cascades Factory.^[13] None of her children accompanied her transportation and one assumes she never saw any of them again. Further tragedy seems to have accompanied her family as her father, Rees Lewis, was convicted of murder in 1826.^{[14][15]} Sadly he was put to death rather than being transported. Catherine applied twice for her Ticket of Leave in 1849 but was refused on both occasions. It was finally granted on 14th May 1850 but she died that same year at the hospital in Hobart, still in servitude. Whilst some women seem to have taken their punishment and made the best of things other like Catherine seemed to make life harder for themselves. Although 7yrs could seem lenient it was still for many a life sentence as they could not afford to return home.

Catherine's time at the Cascade's Factory would have been hard work. There were 13 factories in different parts of Australia and they were set up to provide work for the convict women. This work would vary from spinning to stitching or stocking knitting and straw plaiting. The Cascades Factory was in South Hobart and was one of five factories set up in Van Diemen's Land. As well as being a place of work the Factories also took the role of hospital, houses of correction and prisons.^[16]

Van Diemen's Land also housed the Port Arthur penal colony which from 1833 was used to house the most violent convicts. Many had been transported to Australia but had reoffended on arrival. Others were sent here from other penal colonies because of their continued bad behaviour. Many tried to escape but few were successful.



Port Arthur – now a heritage site.

Photo courtesy of John Ball

In 1853 it was decided to begin sending convicts to Western Australia, to the Swan River Colony. This had been founded in 1829 as a colony for free settlers but had struggled from the start with either too many or too few people.

Finally the British Government saw it as a solution to the overcrowding in their prisons and began sending prisoners who were coming to the end of their sentences as well as newly sentenced prisoners.

In 1853 James Stanton, John Sheen, Joseph Powell and Alexander Huel were brought before the Spring Assizes at Brecon and convicted on various accounts of burglary. They were all sentenced to transportation to the Swan River Colony. James Stanton for 12yrs, John Sheen for 15yrs, Alexander Huel for 10yrs and Joseph Powell for 7yrs. The case can be read in *The Welshman* of 1st April 1853. P4. John Sheen and James Stanton were both given their conditional pardons in 1859 ^[17]

By the 1860's transportation had effectively been discontinued. The last convict ship *The Hougemont* left Britain in 1867 arriving in Western Australia in 1868.



Many of the convicts who had been sent to Australia made good lives for themselves and some became important parts of the establishment as the country developed and grew into the place it is today.

Sue Ashton

The Hougemont

SOURCES

- [1] National Library of Wales. Crime and Punishment Database. https://www.llgc.org.uk/sesiwn_fawr/index_s.htm
- [2] First Fleet information. University of Wollongong. <http://firstfleet.uow.edu.au/index.html>
- [3] Female Convicts Research Centre. <https://www.femaleconvicts.org.au/>
- [4] Convicts Indents Database. University of New South Wales. <https://www.records.nsw.gov.au/archives/collections-and-research/guides-and-indexes/convicts>
- [5] Early Convicts Database. Univ. of New South Wales. https://www.records.nsw.gov.au/search_form?id=65
- [6] Convicts transported in Third Fleet. <http://members.iinet.net.au/~perthdps/convicts/3rdfleet.html>
- [7] Crimes committed by convicts. <https://convictrecords.com.au/crimes>
- [8] National Library of Wales. Crime and Punishment Database. https://www.llgc.org.uk/sesiwn_fawr/index_s.htm

- [9] [Ancestry – convict Transportation registers – other fleets and ships 1791 -1868.
- [10] National Library of Wales. Crime and Punishment Database. https://www.llgc.org.uk/sesiwn_fawr/index_s.htm
- [11] Female Convicts Research Centre. <https://www.femaleconvicts.org.au/>
- [12] Find My Past. Welsh Records Collection. www.findmypast.co.uk
- [13] Female Convicts Research Centre. <https://www.femaleconvicts.org.au/>
- [14] National Library of Wales. Crime and Punishment Database. https://www.llgc.org.uk/sesiwn_fawr/index_s.htm
- [15] The Cambrian 19.8.1826 p.2
- [16] Cascades Factory.
<https://www.femaleconvicts.org.au/index.php/convict-institutions/female-factories>
- [17] [Fremantle Prison Convicts Database. <http://fremantleprison.com.au/history-heritage/history/convict-database/>

GENERAL SOURCES

Convicts to Australia <http://members.iinet.net.au/~perthdps/convicts/>

Convicts to Tasmania <https://www.linc.tas.gov.au/archive-heritage/Pages/default.aspx>

Van Diemen's Land Founders and Survivors Convict Biographies 1812-1853

https://www.digitalpanopticon.org/VDL_Founders_and_Survivors_Convict_Biographies_1812-1853



The Beacon

This free A5 monthly glossy magazine distributed in Brecon and its surrounding villages contains a “Your History” column, contributed by the BLFHS, which often offers an interesting article about the area. Here is the October article about the Brecon Isolation Hospital

The Old Museum

The building in Glamorgan Street now known as 'The Muse' was the home of the first Brecknock museum. It was officially opened on March 1st 1928 in what had been a Congregational Chapel built in 1833.

Until that time, most artefacts found in Breconshire were housed at the National Museum in Cardiff. Lord Glanusk,

however, purchased the dugout canoe found in Llangorse Lake, and placed it in the first Brecknock Museum. The Brecknock Society was founded in 1927, led by the efforts of Sir John Conway Lloyd. Lord Buckland was its first president and paid £300 for the conversion of the chapel.

The first curator was P J Mountney, but due to insufficient funds, his contract was not renewed in 1930.

Sir John Lloyd, with volunteers, developed the museum until it was handed over to Breconshire County Council in 1950.

After the death of Sir John the honorary curator was Canon J Jones Davies, a man of vision and drive and under his direction the museum grew in strength.

By the 1970's the Old Museum building was too small and plans were drawn up to rehouse the museum in the redundant Shire Hall. The transfer was completed by March 1974 and the new Brecknock Museum was opened by the Honorary Curator.



BRECONSHIRE STRAYS

MONMOUTHSHIRE

LLANSOY

Baptisms/Confirmation

Caroline Emily d/o Chas & Margt Jane Howe, Crickhowell, Brecs., Draper. 21 Jun 1837

Mary Edwards Jones. Born 19 Apr 1926. Bapt. 22 Aug 1927 at St Albans, Llanelly. [Confirmation]

Cynthia Stevenson. Born 3 May 1928. Bapt May 1928 at St Mary's Brecon. [Confirmation]

Marriages

Leonard Chas Davies, 29. Bach., fireman, National Fire Service. 2 Grove Villas, Builth Wells. Father: David Davies, retired farmer.

Married

Violet Williams, 22. Spin., Great House, Llansoy. Father: Harold A Williams. 7 Aug. 1954

Witnesses: E? Price, K? M Williams. By Banns

LLANLLOWELL

Marriages

Wm Theobald. X Llanelly, Brecs., Married Margt. Williams, otp. 13 Jun 1843

Witnesses: Jas Jones, Elizth. Redman? X

By Banns with consent of parties

LLANGWM UCHAF

Baptism

Wm supposed s/o John Powell of Brecknockshire. 1 Mar 1745

Marriages

Clifford Edward Davies, 37. Bach., timber feller. Sycamore House, Llangwm. Father: James Davies, lbr., (deceased)

Married

Priscilla Maude Price, 30., Spin., Cilane Farm, Crickadarn, Builth. Father: John Price, farmer (deceased)

Witnesses: WG Edwards, AR Price. By Banns

Burial

Wm supposed s/o John Powell of Brecknockshire, gent. 28 Apr 1746

[Don't forget that at this time New Year was 25 Mar so the child died only a few weeks after baptism]

Free Online Resources

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

U3A Project. Brecon Remembers

A biography of all Brecon WWI war casualties. The book which was produced can be read on this web site

<http://www.breconremembers.co.uk/index.html>

The Last passenger train from Newport to Brecon

A delightful little piece of colour film.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hFXh9vTwU7A>

See also the list of sources attached to the article on Convicts. Most of these databases are free to use.



Local Activities

From Dissipation to Distinction

David Price of Merthyr Cynog: East India Company Soldier and Distinguished Oriental Scholar

A talk by Ken Jones

To be held on

On January 23rd at 3.30pm

at

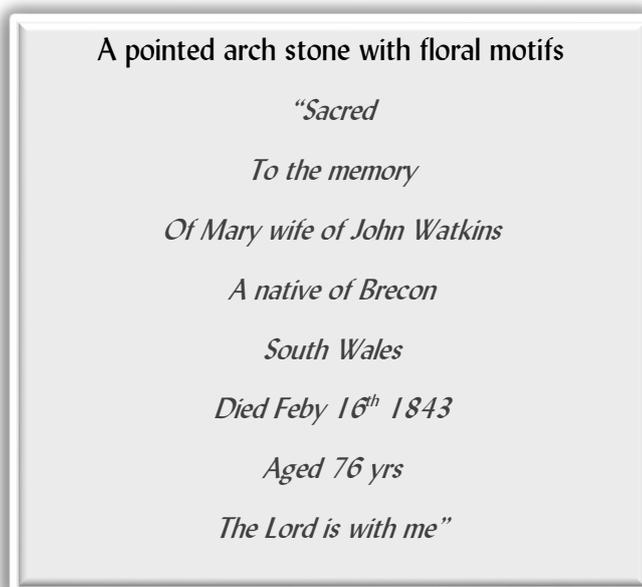
Brecknock Society and Museum Friends

The Muse, Glamorgan Street, Brecon

Free Entry



Found in a graveyard – St John’s Cemetery, County Longford, Ireland



The article about naming patterns struck a chord for one of our members.

Dating back to 1794 they reported seven generations of the family using the name William, all with a connection to sheep farming in Breconshire. Attempting to pin down one ancestor our member typed “William Jones” into the search engine and received 1,650,000 hits! His response: “thank goodness for the BLFHS who put me on the right path!” Furthermore, he reported many ancestors using the name Llewellyn. All died young from disease or accident. Needless to say the name is now banned in the family – just in case! But, they do still use the settle which caused the untimely death of one Llewellyn aged 3 who had used it as a climbing frame only to fall headfirst on to the flagstone floor. He sadly died the same night. Very brave!

Names can bring so much more to our family tree than just their use as an identifier.



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



Can anyone help Crickhowell District Archive Centre with this query?

A broken portion of a gravestone has been found in a garden in Crickhowell. The inscription visible reads "Margaret Vaughan sister of Thomas Vaughan, died October 28 1829 Aged 82".

The volunteers at the Archive Centre have searched all their MI records and looked carefully at the Vaughans of Tretower Court. They have not tracked down a Margaret Vaughan with the profile as above.

Can anyone help? There is no indication as to why the MI is in the garden or if anyone is underneath!



Unwanted Certificates

So often we end up with certificates which prove not to be our ancestor. Rather than let them go to waste we are instituting a section each month listing them for the benefit of any member who might be able to use them. If anyone has any they would like to donate please let me know. Here are a few to kick off with

Deaths

- Richard Jones, a labourer, who died, aged 81 years, on 29th May 1839, in Colwyn, RAD.
- Richard Jones, a tailor who died, aged 47 years, on 19th December 1840, in Builth.

Births

- 3rd August 1880 John Davies son of John and Emma Davies nee Powell, Builth Registrar

If anyone can use these certificates, please contact, Hilary Williams, at enquiries@blfhs.co.uk or telephone: 01874 624432

Website

Our website address is www.blfhs.co.uk

Facebook

The society now has a Facebook page. Check it out at www.facebook.com/breconblfhs

Next Meeting

Date/Time: Tuesday 6th February 2018 2pm
 Place: Brecon Public Library
 Subject: **Isandlwana & Rorke's Drift.**
 Roger Reese, Chairman of LLyn Safaddan History Group will give a personal account of his visit to these historic Sites

Breconshire
Local & Family
History Society



Cymdeithas Hanes
Lleol a Theuluoedd
Brycheiniog

Brecon Public Library

Ship Street, Brecon

Access is through the main library entrance in Ship Street;
or to use the lift, enter via the garage area in Bell Lane.

Isandlwana & Rorke's Drift

Roger Reese, Chairman of LLyn Safaddan History Group will give a personal account of his visit to these historic Sites

Tuesday, 6th February 2018:00pm

All Welcome

(£1.00 entry fee for non-members)

Further details from Hilary Williams (01874) 624432
and on our website: <http://www.blfhs.co.uk/>