



# Breconshire Local & Family History Society (BLFHS) Cymdeithas Hanes Lleol a Theuluoedd Brycheiniog Newsletter 66 - June 2017

## Chairman's Report to the Annual General Meeting held on Tuesday, 6th June 2017

This last year has been quite busy. We started the year with a visit to Talgarth Mill where members enjoyed a tour of the flour mill and gardens, followed by refreshment in the café.

In August we had a walk around Crickhowell which was very interesting and enjoyable

Alison Noble prepared a display of Myths and Legends for the History Week in September, which was put up in the library.

We have completed the monumental transcriptions at Llanylltyd Church, near the Mountain Centre.

In November we published the book on "Historic Houses in Brecon" and we had a table at the "Bells in Brecon" Xmas Fair, where we sold 22 copies. To date we have sold about 130 copies of the book.

In December we took part in the Christmas Tree Festival in the Cathedral, where we had cards for children to write their own family tree on and hang on our Christmas tree. This proved very popular and by the end of the festival we had more than 50 cards hanging on the tree.

Helen Ball's 1901 Project is coming along nicely, and she would be interested in any information about your families or any other events that took place in 1901.

Mary Zorkoczy and her Transcription Group have provided John Ball with a lot of information for the website. Brecon Dementia Group asked if we could supply them with some old photographs of Brecon, so I made a file containing about 40 photographs of Brecon Past & Present. They were very pleased with it, and immediately asked me to make for two more files.

Sue Ashton has taken over producing our monthly newsletter, and has produced some very interesting newsletters, but would like members to supply small articles and information that could be included in future newsletters.

As John Ball is handing over the website to Jennie Williams I would like to thank him for all the hard work he has put in producing and running the website.

As you may know the website is frozen at present while Jennie sets up the new site and wish her all the best with this task.

We finished the year with a very interesting walk around Brecon conducted by Margaret Sommers, thank you Margaret for taking us round.

## This month on our website

### Just a reminder

From April 30<sup>th</sup> the website will be frozen. During this period of hibernation members will still be able to access the current website as normal but no new items will be placed on it, no old items will be removed, and no amendments will be made. Items of Society news and our monthly Newsletters will be emailed directly to members. When the new website is up and running, visitors will be able to access old and new data as before. Members will be kept informed by email of the progress of the upgrade and of course will be told when the new website is up and running. 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.

We are now beginning our seventh year, and have an interesting programme of talks lined up for you, and I look forward to seeing you at future meetings.

Finally I would like to thank my fellow committee members for the hard work and support they have provided over the last year and I look forward to working with them in the future.

Robert Eckley

### Election of Officers

The following nominations have been received

Chair: Rob Eckley  
Proposed: Vi Evans  
Seconded: Ann Voss

Secretary: Hilary Williams  
Proposed: Geoff Sykes  
Seconded: Glen Harris

Treasurer: Eirwen Jones  
Proposed: John Ball  
Seconded: Kathryn Kelly

### Election of Committee Members

The following members have been nominated en bloc

Sue Ashton	Margaret Sommers
Vi Evans	Jennie Williams
Glen Harris	Ann Voss
Kathryn Kelly	Mary Zorkoczy

Proposed: Jennifer Lewis  
Seconded: Helen Ball

### The Beacon

This free A5 monthly glossy magazine distributed in Brecon and its surrounding villages contains a “Your History” column which often offers an interesting article about the area. The latest piece is entitled Wills and Inventories. Worth a read.

## “One Man – Two Lives”

Continuing the story of Rees Price Pritchard.

### The Welsh Voice is heard on the Farm

Farming was the lifeblood of the Welsh economy in the early 1800's and our Pritchard's would have farmed here in much the same way that their countrymen had done for hundreds of years. However, Samuel was born into a time of political unrest in the Welsh farming community. When he was just a nipper the farmers of Wales found a unique and somewhat admirable way of protesting against high tollgate charges (Evans, 2016).

Frankly, Welsh farmers were struggling. They had not been eager to adopt the technological advancements in English agriculture. They were proud traditionalists; small holders or tenants who farmed mainly for themselves and a simple lifestyle. A description written by a local Registrar at the time illustrates the situation.

*"About three or four farmers are contented to gain here by frugality a scanty livelihood, they sow a few acres of oats and barley. Sheep however are their principal dependence, which in some years turn out very profitably with little or no expense" (Jones, 1809)*

Some years were good and others were tough. But when the population doubled in the century to 1840, making a living became a strain for the farmer and his family. To add to this the Welsh, like their Irish compatriots watched the bottom fall out of the sheep and cattle markets. Coping with Tollgate Trusts who blocked off local roads to charge extra fees was just too much. Taking sheep to market and even heading to a neighbouring farm to gather lime for fertilising crops would incur charges. So, armed with a verse from the Bible about the outspoken Rebekah and her daughters, the men dressed in women's clothes and attacked tollgates under the cover of darkness.

*"They blessed Rebekah and said to her, "May you, our sister, become thousands of ten thousands, and may your descendants possess the gate of those who hate them."  
Genesis XXIV, verse 60*

The villagers naturally protected the identity of the rioters; they were their fathers and sons after all!



Figure 8 Depiction of the Rebecca Riots, Illustrated London News 1843

And over the next five years their plight gathered momentum with protests spilling into daylight in the streets and in church halls. Despite government troops being sent in and the supposed 'ringleaders' deported to Australia, very few were ever caught. Even reporters from London's The Times newspaper who had been sent over to write about the rebels turned a sympathetic ear to the cause. Eventually a Royal Inquiry was held and laws were altered to greatly reduce the powers of toll operators.

The economy recovered over time, but the deep-seated Welsh 'attachment to the land' slackened for Samuel and his generation. And it wasn't long before he too had left farming behind!

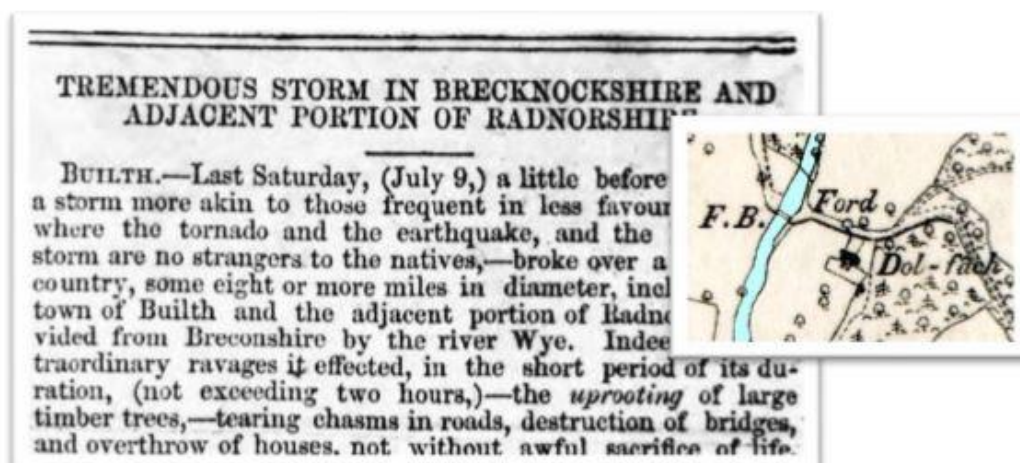
## Floods and Flight

At fourteen Samuel appears again working for a neighbour, Widow Jane Lawrence as her servant on the 'Dolfach' property. This pretty little cottage by the ford over the River Dunohw may be where Samuel's passion for gardening was sparked. It is hard to tell that for sure, but we can be certain that he never returns to farming again. However, while his future in gardening might have started here, his association with the cottage and Widow Lawrence was tragically cut short three years later in 1853.

It had been a very dry year; the fourth driest on record. So the next July, when a storm hit early in the morning it was described aptly by the local papers as 'horrendous weather'. An astonishing total of twenty stone bridges in the area were washed away as were a number of farms, fir plantations and poor Widow Lawrence's cottage. Folk were used to losing loved ones to illness or farm accident, but not like this. This was a tragedy. Mrs Lawrence and her daughter, two grandchildren and servants all perished in the thunderstorm as the cottage collapsed in on itself. Neighbours watched on in horror as the cottage disappeared before their eyes, propelled down the valley by large trees which had coursed down the river from the hillside above.



Occurring during the early hours of Sunday morning may have saved Samuel's life, for the article does not mention another servant who was absent. He was probably at his parents' house above the valley. It is also likely that Rice Price's farm was impacted by the storm too. The article goes on to describe a



scene of chaos in the valley, where the farms on the hillsides and down by the river were turned to "mud and destruction" (Welshman, 1853).

Figure 10 Newspaper Article from *The Welshman* and small inset showing the ford just by the Dolfach cottage (Welshman, 1853).



Figure 9 Modern-day Pwllgwyn Farm on the slope above the River Dunohw and Llanddewi'r Cwm. Top photo 'out buildings' with the farmhouse just showing through the trees on the right. Bottom photo is of the farmhouse with four gabled windows looking out on the farmyard.

Certainly within a couple of years Rice had uprooted his family again further south to Llangorse and Rice Junior doesn't appear to inherit the land either. Samuel moves on again too. He moves out over the border to England and finds work as a groom and gardener for another woman landowner, a Vickers daughter this time in Luston, Herefordshire.

At this point Samuel's life, on record, seems to fly by so fast and perhaps he had a sense of this too. His younger brother dies suddenly at just ten years old and before Samuel is thirty his father and other brother Levi have also gone. In his early thirties Samuel is home again in Wales, looking after his elderly mother. He is unmarried and now also unemployed. He makes a decision; to leave, to start afresh – to become a new man.



Figure 11 The S.S. 'Great Britain' leaving Cumberland Basin, Bristol on her Maiden Voyage, 23rd January, 1845. First named the 'Mammoth' she was a third larger than any other ship in service at the time.

Follow Part Two – The Road to Frank – in next month's newsletter.



## Free Online Resources

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

### The Cromwell Association

This association has created a free resource, The Cromwell Association Online Directory of Parliamentarian Army Officers. Published by British History Online, the database contains the names of over 4,000 officers who served in the armies of Parliament during the first English civil war (1642-6), and in some cases subsequently. This alphabetical directory covers all regions of England and Wales and, while not claiming to be comprehensive, brings together in one place the largest listing of parliamentarian officers in service prior to the creation of the New Model Army in 1645.

[www.british-history.ac.uk/no-series/cromwell-army-officers](http://www.british-history.ac.uk/no-series/cromwell-army-officers)



**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](mailto:editorblfhs@outlook.com)



## BRECONSHIRE STRAYS

## MONMOUTHSHIRE

## LLANFOIST

Burials

Thos Thomas otp died at Llanelly 12 Sep 1844 [age] 52  
 Elizth Thomas wife of David Thomas, Llanelly parish, 31 may 1848 [age] 51  
 Mary Ann Jones daughter of John Jones Llanelly Common, 20 Nov 1848 [age] 3  
 Christopher Jones Llanelly Common, 16 Sep 1849 [age] 13yrs 6mths  
 Annie Eleanor Broster, Bryn Mawr 19 Oct 1849 [age] 11 days  
 Thos Edwards Llanelly 3 Feb 1850 [age] 84  
 Sarah Howard, Llanethly, Llanninerth? 11 Jan 1851  
 Anne Rogers, Brynmawr 6 May 1853 [age] 65  
 Ann Kershaw, Brynmawr 6 Mar 1855 [age] 29  
 Wm Jones, Brynmawr 8 Mar 1855 [age] 9mths  
 Susanah Charles, Brynmawr 6 Aug 1855 [age] 8wks  
 Harry Kershaw Broster, Brynmawr 1 Jan 1856 [age] 3mths  
 Elizth Charles, Brynmawr 16 Sep 1857 [age] 6wks  
 Wm Richards, Llanelly 23 Sep 1858 [age] 3yrs 8mths  
 Margt Thomas, Llanethly 9 Jan 1859 [age] 72  
 Milecent? Moss, Brynmawr 24 Apr 1859 [age] 11mths  
 Rees Jones, Brynmawr 12 Aug 1859 [age] 29  
 Wm Charles, Brynmawr 14 Aug 1859 [age] 2mths  
 Jessie Elizth Richards, Llanethly 12 Oct 1859 [age] 1yr 8mths  
 Elias Moss, Brynmawr 18? Dec 1860 [age] 8mths

Justice was firm and fearsome during the eighteenth century. An item in the Express\* of 27 February 1913 reports the following:

"Margaret Jenkins was sentenced at Brecon in 1795 to seven years transportation to Botany Bay". There are many other cases on record, but the cost of transporting prisoners eventually became so expensive, that magistrates found some other mode of punishment. The "cat of nine tails" became a favourite weapon, and 60 strokes seems to have been the usual limit. Prisoners were treated with great barbarity, and were chained together as if they were wild beasts. Women were frequently flogged in public, and one poor creature was in 1787 sentenced at Brecon, for petty larceny, to solitary confinement, with hard labour for three years. The pillory was an institution, and was erected before the Shire Hall, then in [Brecon] High Street. A man was sentenced to be whipped at the carts' tail in Brecon, and to receive 60 lashes, one minute to expire between every lash. This was to take place at noon in the month of January out in the open street; after the punishment, if he survived he was to go into hard labour for twelve months. A woman was publicly whipped, then kept in prison for twelve months, and then whipped again on her release. All the public whippings took place in the High street on market days. For stealing a cock and three hens, a man was sent into transportation for seven years. In 1751 a woman was sentenced by the magistrates at Brecon to be stripped from the waist upwards and then tied to a cart's tail, and so whipped from the gaol (probably

in the Struet) to the Usk Bridge, and from thence back again; it was to take place between the hours of twelve and one in the day-time. This punishment was inflicted because the woman stole two shillings of English money. There are other cases of this kind in the Records of Magisterial proceedings in Breconshire. The old "ducking stool" has disappeared, but the "stocks" may still be seen in the entrance to the Guildhall at Brecon.

\*It has not been possible to establish which newspaper this refers to. The National Library of Wales has a useful resource detailing crimes, criminals and punishments from the gaol files of the Court of Great Sessions in Wales from 1730 to its abolition in 1830. The database can be found at [www.llgc.org.uk/sesiwn\\_fawr/index\\_s.htm](http://www.llgc.org.uk/sesiwn_fawr/index_s.htm)



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## June Meeting Review: AGM and an illustrated talk about old Brecon

A voice recording was made of Rob Eckley's talk which will be available once the new website is up and running.

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### Website

Our website address is [www.blfhs.co.uk](http://www.blfhs.co.uk)

### Next Meeting

Date/Time: Tuesday July 2nd 2017 2pm

Place: Brecon Cathedral 2pm

Subject: The Havard Chapel, Brecon Cathedral  
Lt Col Rodney Ashwood will talk about the Rorke's Drift Memorials in the Havard Chapel



Breconshire  
Local & Family  
History Society



Cymdeithas Hanes  
Lleol a Theuluoedd  
Brycheiniog

*Visit to the  
Havard Chapel  
Brecon Cathedral*

**Lt. Col Rodney Ashwood will talk about the  
Rorkes's Drift Memorials in the Havard Chapel**

**Tuesday, 4<sup>th</sup> July 2017**

**2:00pm**

**All Welcome**

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