



## **Newsletter 18 – January 2013**



**The Committee wishes everyone  
Health and Happiness for 2013**

Welcome to our eighteenth 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.

### **January Meeting Review**

As usual the Meeting was in two sections:

- Helen Whyte continued her series on using internet sources in Family History research. She explained how to order birth certificates but cautioned that such documents are only of value in family history if they provide information that we did not already possess.
- *Starting your Family History* – John Ball and Hilary Williams gave tips and ideas about how to get going with your family history research.

Remember that both sections of the meeting can be accessed in audio and slide format on our website, as well as Notes entitled “Starting Your Family History”

### **Exhibition: 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Closure to Passengers of the four Railways into Brecon**

At Brecon Library – throughout January 2013.

Railway passenger services in Brecon ended in December 1962. To commemorate the 50th anniversary of the closure of Brecon's passenger railways we are running an exhibition of 'then and now' photographs in Brecon Library, Ship Street, Brecon. The exhibition is curated by BLFHS Committee Member Rob Eckley, who has provided many of the photographs. Please drop in and explore the photographs for yourself. We hope they will evoke happy memories of the railways in and around Brecon. A notebook is available at the exhibition in which to record your thoughts and memories. Selected background information on Brecon's railways follows.

### **British Railway Milestones – a Timeline**

- 1604 The first wagon way in Britain is constructed in the East Midlands to transport coal to the River Trent.
- 1769 Scottish engineer James Watt patents a vastly improved steam engine. Together with Matthew Boulton he goes on to make crucial developments in steam power.
- 1804 The world's first steam locomotive railway journey takes place in Penydarren, Merthyr Tydfil. The engine was built by Cornish engineer Richard Trevithick.
- 1825 The Stockton and Darlington Railway opens; it is the world's first public railway.
- 1829 George and Robert Stephenson's Rocket triumphs in the Rainhill Trials contest to find the best locomotive for the Liverpool and Manchester Railway that will open the following year.
- 1840s Railway mania takes hold in Britain. By 1854 the railway network stretches to over 6000 miles, and by 1900 there are over 23,000 miles of track.
- 1853 The Crimean War begins. During the conflict, Britain creates the Grand Crimean Central Railway to aid with logistics.
- 1863 The railway comes to Brecon.**
- 1914 The First World War sees railways playing a crucial role for the combatants in the transport of food and other materials.
- 1938 The British locomotive *Mallard* sets a world record speed of 125mph. This remains the record for a steam powered locos.

- 1948 Britain's railways are nationalised by the Labour government at time when motor cars are beginning to supersede train travel.
- 1962 Dr Beeching closes many of the smaller railway lines, and the railway disappears from Brecon.

[Information taken from the *BBC History Magazine* and other sources]

## The Four Railways into Brecon

### Historical Background

The **Brecon & Merthyr Railway** reached Brecon on 23rd April 1863, with a service from Pant. It was built partially on the route of the 1816 Hay Tramroad, although this was the intended alignment for the Hereford, Hay & Brecon Railway.

Initially the Brecon & Merthyr trains used the Watton Station in Brecon, but on 1st March 1871, trains from the east and south used the new Brecon Joint Station at Free Street. The last passenger train on this line ran on 31<sup>st</sup> December 1962.

Trains on the **Hereford, Hay & Brecon Railway** reached Brecon on 19th September 1864 and they were initially operated by the Brecon & Merthyr Railway until the Midland Railway (later the LMS) took responsibility for this railway. The last passenger train ran on the 31<sup>st</sup> December 1962.

The **Mid Wales Railway** opened between Three Cocks Junction and Llanidloes on 21st September 1864 for passengers. The last passenger train ran on this route on 31<sup>st</sup> December 1962.

The **Neath & Brecon Railway** reached Brecon on 8th June 1866, using its own station at Mount Street. From 3rd August 1874, Mount Street was abandoned and all trains from the north and west used the new Brecon Joint Station at Free Street. The final passenger train ran in October 1962. Brecon Joint Station at Free Street had four platforms to accommodate the four routes to Brecon.

### Further Research

- *County Railway Routes Series*, by Middleton Press, includes publications on the following: *Brecon to Newtown*; *The Mid Wales Line*; *Brecon to Neath*; *Brecon to Newport*; a DVD entitled *Four Ways to Brecon*. Further titles can be found on the publisher's website: <https://www.middletonpress.co.uk/books/railways/country-railway-routes/>
- *Oakwood Library of Railway History Series* includes publications on the following: *The Brecon & Merthyr Railway*; *The Mid-Wales Railway*. Further titles can be found on the publisher's website: <http://www.oakwoodpress.co.uk/>

Other Books:

- G.B. Jones & D. Dunstone *The Origins of the LMS in South Wales*, Gomer Press, 1999
- G.B. Jones, D. Dunstone & T. Watkins *The Neath and Brecon Railway: A History*, Gomer Press, 2005
- Peter Dale *Brecknock, Carmarthen & Radnor Lost Railways*, Stenlake Publishing, 2005
- William H. Smith *The Hereford, Hay and Brecon Branch*, Kidderminster Railway Museum, 2009
- C.R. Clinker *The Hay Railway*, David & Charles, 1960

### NEXT MEETING

Date and time: Wednesday, 6th February 2013 at 2:00pm  
 Venue: Brecon Library  
 Subject: *Brynore Tram Road* by John Jones

**BLFHS WEBSITE:** Our website address: [www.blfhs.co.uk](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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