



Breconshire Local & Family History Society (BLFHS)

Cymdeithas Hanes Lleol a Theuluoedd Brycheiniog

Newsletter 64 - April 2017

“Allo Allo!

Policing in Breconshire was almost non-existent until the early nineteenth century. Law and order was largely looked after by parish constables who were not paid nor trained and most could not read or write. For this reason there was a belief that their interaction with any crime was motivated more by familial links than by any belief in the search for justice. Thus local feuds could be dealt with by the Constables who tended to ignore those people they knew and concentrate on those who they had a local beef with. These Constables were tasked to work for one year but had to find their own replacement before they could retire. A lease document at Powys Archives does mention a Superintendent of Police in Brecon as early as 1805¹. Joseph Stephens seems to have been not only responsible for this but also for weights and measures (1852)² and described as the Inspector of Nuisances (1855.)³ Interestingly he does not seem to be in any of the early censuses which makes it difficult to determine whether this is one and the same person or whether there were numerous Joseph Stephens at this time in Brecon. Certainly one sat down for a meal with his tenants in 1858⁴

Upwards of 40 tenants of Mr. Joseph Stephens, intendent of Police, Brecon, sat down to an ex dinner, provided by the host, Mr. Abel Powell Lunsbury, on Thursday, Nov. 4th. Several other were prevented from attending through illness and from home. Mr. John Ricketts, Trebarved, kindl the chair, assisted by several of Mr. Stephens's f After the cloth was removed, the “convivial was indulged in, and a number of toasts were The tenants were highly gratified with the libera their landlord.

Monmouthshire Merlin 13 Nov 1858 p8

After the Rural Constabulary Act in 1839 Brecon employed three constables who were all uniformed and paid. They were managed by the town councillors and would work seven days a week for up to twelve hours a day. The Brecon County Times of Sep 16 1915 refers back to a list of town worthies in 1854. Joseph Stephens is the Superintendent of Police assisted by Constables Thomas Watkins, Samuel Powell and Evan Jones.

By 1856 some councils were seeing the benefit of this more organised system to deal with crime and punishment and so set up their own constabularies. These were seen as operating

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

Tredustan Chapel records and maps added to newly developed Talgarth parish page
[updated 24 Apr 2017]

www.blfhs.co.uk/members/parishes/talgarth/

Newsletter

Newsletter 64 (the one you are now reading)

www.blfhs.co.uk/members/newsletters.htm

Monthly Meetings

Minutes of Committee Meetings for February and March 2017

www.blfhs.co.uk/members/minutes.htm

Monthly meeting for April 2017. Sound recording and slide show on the South Wales Sanatorium, Bronllys

[updated 24 Apr 2017]

www.blfhs.co.uk/members/meetings/

Members' News Pages

List of members' interests

[updated 24 April 2017]

www.blfhs.co.uk/members/members-interests.htm

Link from Members' Home page to Parish boundary maps [updated 24 Apr 2017]

<http://www.blfhs.co.uk/members/parish-maps/>

Noticeboard

Announcement about the forthcoming website “freeze”

[updated 24 Apr 2017]

www.blfhs.co.uk/noticeboard.htm#notices

Publication of new book “Handball: the story of Wales' first National Sport” by Kevin Dicks

[updated 24 Apr 2017]

www.blfhs.co.uk/noticeboard.htm#notices

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

much more effectively and so the County and Borough Police Act of 1856 was enacted which encouraged other counties to follow suit.

Breconshire set up their own constabulary in 1857, coming into force on the 6th of January of that year. The Cardiff and Merthyr Guardian of 17th Jan 1857. P7 reported that there had been thirty-nine applications for the job of Superintendent (by 1859 the incumbent was calling himself Chief Constable – Monmouthshire Merlin 9 Apr 1859 p3) and that they had whittled this down to six of which only two appear to have had experience; Joseph Stephens, already the Superintendent of the Brecon Borough Police and of the Hundreds of Penkelly and Merthyr and Mr David Smith a District Superintendent in the Oxford County Police. In the Statement of Accounts for 1855⁵ Stephens' quarterly salary for 1853 is recorded as 63.8s.2d rising in 1864 to £64. 1s.3d. A not inconsiderable salary when annualised and maybe a reflection of his responsibilities and experience. Despite this he and Smith both lost out in that they received not one vote from the appointing committee the votes going to the two military candidates; Lieutenant Gwynne of the Brecon Royal Rifles and Captain D Geraghty late of the 88th and 15th Regiments. The winner was Lieutenant Gwynne of the Royal Brecon Rifles who was employed at a rate of £250 per year. It is perhaps not surprising that this was the result of the vote as one would expect at this time it was considered more important that the person chosen was a "gentleman" rather than that he had the credentials and training to be in charge of such an organisation. But I wonder how Joseph Stephens felt about this?

A Breconshire police constable



During the early days there was a force of 29; The Chief Constable, Superintendent, Sergeant and three Constables were based at Brecon. Defynnog had one Sergeant and Trecastle had a Constable. Others were based at Talgarth, Crickhowell and Hay. Brynmawr had a Superintendent, a Sergeant and two Constables. Some of the authorities were reluctant to place greater numbers of policemen in the rural districts believing that they did not need such a concentration as the growing industrial areas.

Now that there was a professional force there was a need for a proper uniform. In general each policeman had a great coat with cape as well as a coat, two pairs of trousers, one pair of boots and shoes, one hat and one stock. Constables and Sergeants had to be able to read and write and were paid around 15/-a week. In rural areas the Chief Constable was given a horse and a travel allowance whilst the Superintendent had to provide his own horse but was given an allowance for its keep.

By the late 1860's the number of policemen rose and by the early 1870's there were thirty-four in the County and four for Brecknock Borough. Crimes at this time numbered approximately sixty-five with One hundred and forty suspected person at large and fifty-three "houses of bad character". The only prison at this time was at Brecon although a new police station was built in Brecon on Captain's Walk where it remained for the next hundred years. The Parliamentary Papers of the House of Commons (vol 36) report the results of the Inspector of Constabulary during 1861. The population was 56,392 which meant that there 12,670 people per constable. The breakdown of the force at this time was twenty-four married, three widowers and eight single men. What the relevance of this was is indeterminate but it does give a picture of the kind of men who were employed.

Old Brecon Police Station



Crimes during this year were largely concerned with breaches of cattle regulations, not unexpected in a largely rural area. The number of vagrants provided with lodgings by the police was one thousand four hundred and sixty-eight which was a large increase on the year before (which had been 993).⁶ Overall the report found that the Breconshire force was an efficient one. This was not so in Brecon Borough which had only four policemen; considered to be insufficient for its size. As a result it was felt that it was impossible for them to be efficient. This would seem to support the view that the rural areas at this time did not need as many policemen as the growing towns.

The creation of a national police force was intermittent and beset with problems in the early days. Many counties did not think that a properly organised force was necessary and it wasn't until the Act of 1856 that this attitude began to change as they were forced to take action. There were many developments after 1857 but in 1948 Breconshire, Radnorshire and Montgomeryshire merged to become the Mid-Wales Constabulary which merged later with Carmarthen, Pembroke and Cardigan to become Dyfed-Powys Constabulary in 1968 and Dyfed-Powys Police in 1974.

This is but a brief look at the police force as it developed in Breconshire and I must reference the interesting website "Victorian Powys for schools"⁷ which started me off with this article. For anyone interested in the subject the local Powys Archives contain many documents which will provide a far more detailed account than that which I have written here.

Sue Ashton

References.

¹ Lease (Counterpart). 9 Nov 1805. Powys Archive ref B/BR/150/1/38

² The Welshman. 24 Dec 1852 p3

³ The Welshman 10 Aug 1855 p6

⁴ Monmouthshire Merlin 13 Nov 1858 p3

⁵ Statement for the year ending 31 Aug 1854. Hereford Times. 17 Feb 1855.p2

⁶ The treatment of vagrants by the police was determined by the way-ticket system. This was intended to ensure that vagrants and undesirables did not arrive and stay within the county and so become the responsibility of the authorities. The way-ticket was given to the vagrant when he arrived and it showed his intended route and destination. If he adhered to this he would be given accommodation and food as he traversed the county. In this way vagrants with no links to the areas were moved on.

⁷ Victorian Powys for schools.

<http://history.powys.org.uk/school1/primhome.shtml>

BRECONSHIRE STRAYS

MONMOUTHSHIRE

LLANFOIST

Banns

Henry Morgan otp & Elizth Evans, Llanelly. Banns 20/27 May & 3 Jun 1764.

John Meredith otp & Sarah Parry, Llanelly, Brecs. Banns 17/24 Apr & 1 May 1785.

Abraham Williams Llangattock, Crickhowell parish & Rachel Phillips otp. Banns 8/15/22 Aug 1790.

Marriages

Joshua Morgan, X Llanelly & Mary Morgan, X otp. Wits. John Morgan, X & Walter David, X. Banns. 11 Jan 1763

David Lloyn, X Llansanfraed, Brecs. & Anne Evans, X otp. Wits. Wm Pendry? & Magdalen Rogers, X. Banns. 27 Feb 1765

Phillip Price, Llangenny, Brecs. & Margt Williams, X otp. Wits. John Jayne & Wm Price. Licence. ? May 1767

John Watkins, X Llanelly, Brecs. & Martha Rosser, X otp. Wits. Thos Thomas & Morgan Rosser X. Banns. 8 Aug 1773

Evan Morgan, X Llangattock, Crickhowell, Brecs. & Jane Llewelyn, X otp. Wits. Wm llewlyn, X & Ann Williams. Banns. 12 Jul 1789

Thos Davies? X, Llanelly, Brecs. & Martha Morgan, X otp. Wits. Aaron Brute & Marry? Morgan. Banns. 8 Nov? 1798

John Williams, X*, parish of Llanelly, Miner, Bach. & Mary Morgan, X* otp. Spin. Wits. Jas Williams & Elizth Lewis. With consent of friends.

Banns. 30 May 1827

Wm Prosser, parish of Llanelly, Brecs. Batch. & Elizth Jarrett, otp Spin. Wits. Eliza Jones? & Jas Kershaw. With consent of friends. Licence. 17

Apr 1834

Danl Reynolds, X parish of Llanelly, brecs. Batch & Leah Watkins, X otp. Spin. Wits. Thos? Watkins & Margt Watkins, X. With consent of friends.

Banns. 19 May 1834

[X = signed by mark. X* = signed 1 letter]



Free Online Resources

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

Although not free the following new resource has just become available via Ancestry and may be of interest to members with ancestors who migrated from Breconshire to the valleys of Glamorganshire.

Swansea's Criminal Past



Ancestry have just released the Gaol records for Swansea and the surrounding area. This collection covers the years between 1877 and 1922 and is part of a wider launch of over 6m Glamorgan records from the collection help by the West Glamorgan Archive Service. The collection includes photographs of criminals – men, women and children who were arrested and held at Swansea police station. The records hold details of all crimes from the petty to the serious. Records can be searched by name, birth year and birthplace.



MAJOR CHANGES TO OUR WEBSITE

At the June AGM John Ball will be standing down from his position of Webmaster as well as his position on the Management Committee. John is a founder member of the Society and set up and has managed the website since its foundation in 2011. A brief look at the website provides evidence of the immense amount of work that John has put into its development. The website is well organised and much of its content is produced by John himself. This has involved hundreds of hours of work and the Management Committee is most grateful for the time and effort he has spent on this task, notwithstanding his other contributions to the Society.

Secretary, Hilary Williams was tasked with finding a replacement for John. No mean feat! She contacted Jennie Williams [Advisor to Webmaster] about how we might proceed. It was agreed that we could not expect John's successor to put in the hours that he has devoted to the website. Jennie suggested that the answer would be to convert the website design to a **Content Management System** (CMS). Amongst other advantages, using CMS would mean that members without knowledge of HTML coding could be trained to put content onto the website, so sharing the load. Jennie agreed to be in overall charge of the website, as Webmaster. This change will be put to members at the AGM in June. For Jennie to convert the present website to CMS, it will be necessary to "freeze" the current website for a number of weeks, until the conversion is complete.

From April 30th 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.

Best wishes

Hilary Williams. General and Members Secretary

MEMBERS' INTERESTS

New Member interests added to our website. If you can provide any assistance to these members please contact them using the details on the website. You can access the list from the Resources drop down list on the Members' homepage or by going directly to www.blfhs.co.uk/members/members-interests.htm

MEMBER: Paul Hudgell

NAME	PLACE	DATES
HAVARD	Llanelly, Brec.	1800-1900



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



March Meeting Review: Talyllyn Railway Village [this item held over from last month]

At the March meeting of BLFHS, a good number of members and visitors welcomed Roger Reese. They were enthralled by his presentation on Talyllyn and his enthusiasm for his subject. Roger is the Chairman of Llyn Syfaddan History Group and with the aid of many maps and photographs brought to life the characters, community and buildings of Talyllyn during the heyday of the railways. He outlined the development of the village when the railways arrived and explained the changes which had taken place. He included information on "The Refresh" (the platform refreshment room) and the couple who ran it. His photos included some of the houses built for railway workers, one of which remains unchanged after ninety years. There followed a lively discussion, with people offering their own memories of the time.

Ann Voss

April Meeting Review: South Wales Sanatorium, Bronllys

There is no written review but a sound recording and accompanying slides can be found on the BLFHS website. www.blfhs.co.uk/members/meetings/



Website

Our website address is www.blfhs.co.uk

Next Meeting

Date/Time: Tuesday May 2nd 2017 2pm

Place: Meet upstairs at Brecon Library by 1.45 for a 2pm start

Subject: A walk around historical Brecon
To be led by Margaret Sommers

