



Breconshire Local & Family History Society (BLFHS)

Cymdeithas Hanes Lleol a Theuluoedd Brycheiniog

Newsletter 95 - Spring 2022

Looking behind the dates on Memorial inscriptions

Despite the harsh conditions of living in rural Breconshire during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries there are instances of people living very long lives. In the graveyard at Llanfihangel Tallylyn is a stone to one Roger Prosser, his wife Margaret and daughter Ann.

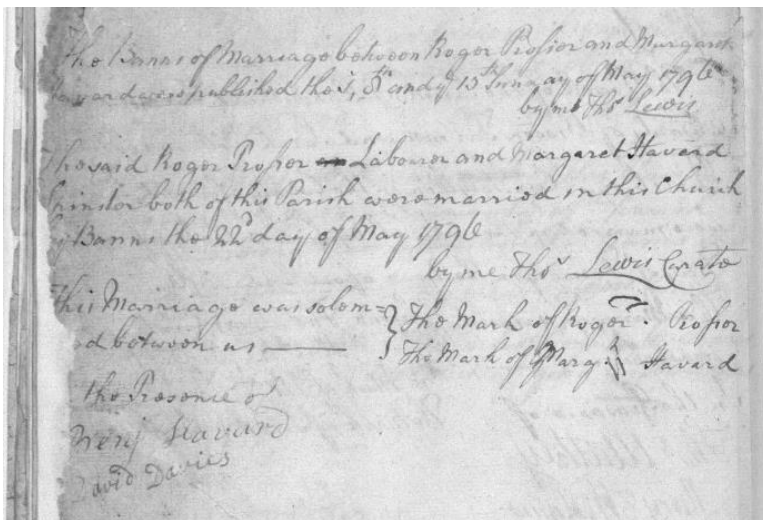
“Coffadwriaeth cyfiawn sydd bendigedig...diar..pen...ad...7”

To the memory of Margaret, wife of Roger PROSSER of this parish who died May 6 1854 aged 89 Also of the said Roger PROSSER who died Oct 5th 1854 aged 101. Also Ann daughter of the said Roger and Mary (sic) PROSSER who died Oct 31 1864 aged 53. “Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord”

Was Roger really 101 when he died? I decided to investigate and see what I could find out about this couple who just happen to be my 3x great grandparents.

This month on our website

Bitesize, our latest edition: the Joyce family of Llanfrynach.
This can be found on our website

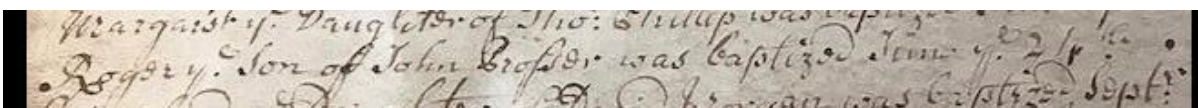


Marriage Roger Prosser and Margaret Havard.
Llanfihangel tal y llyn. 22 May 1796

Both Roger and Margaret appear in the 1851 census which is useful as it tells us where they were born; Roger at Aberyscir and Margaret at Llanyern. Their ages in 1851 are respectively Roger, 101 and Margaret, 86. This means Roger was born in 1750 and Margaret in 1765. Their marriage took place at Llanfihangel Tallylyn in 1796 which makes them a couple marrying later than was the norm. Roger at 46 and Margaret at 31 yrs old. We might consider they had both been married before but so far no evidence has been found to support this. Seeking Roger I searched the Aberyscir parish records between 1745 and 1769 and found

only one baptism for a Roger Prosser. If we assume this is the same person he was baptised 24th June 1765 to John and Margaret Prosser née Pugh. They also baptised Margaret in 1763 (died 1768), David in 1766 and

another Margaret in 1769. Was Roger baptised at birth or was he baptised as a child? Would this account for the discrepancy in age? The baptism record does not indicate how old he was so we cannot be sure. What is possible is that he was the same age as Margaret who was also baptised in 1765.



Baptism of Roger Prosser. 24.6.1765. Aberyscir

Roger’s potential parents John Prosser and Margaret Pugh were married in 1760 at Aberyscir but there are no baptisms at Aberyscir for any child between the date of the marriage and Roger’s baptism in 1765. Were there other children who died but were not baptised, did they have children in another parish, or was Roger their first born? We can only speculate. It is true that many people did not really know exactly when they were born but one would expect that a couple would know if

one partner was quite a lot older than the other. Looking at available records there are no other Roger Prossers born around the year 1750 so let us assume that Roger born Aberyscir is indeed the Roger buried at Llanfihangel Tallylyn. Interestingly the BTs for Aberyscir for the years 1745-1759 only record one other instance of a Prosser family in the parish, that being John son of Howell Prosser who was buried in 1749. Perhaps this reflects that John Prosser himself was recorded as from Llanfihangel nant brane in the marriage record and therefore was an 'incomer'.

We know little of Roger's early life except that his brother David appears in the records for the Royal Monmouthshire Engineers (Militia) having been attested at Brecon in 1802 at age 39yrs (again there is a slight discrepancy with his year of birth).¹ He is described as a labourer of fresh complexion with grey eyes standing 5ft 4" tall. He possibly married Martha Lewis of Llanfihangel Tallylyn in 1786 at Llanfihangel and had six children. He died in 1820 and is buried at Aberyscir.

Roger's wife Margaret was a Havard, the eldest of three sisters the others being Ann (b. 1769) and Elizabeth (b. 1772). The Havards were an old family descending from the Havre de Grace's who came over from France during the Norman Conquest. There are many lines and it has been difficult to establish from which line Margaret descended. Her father Benjamin was the fourth child and third son of Thomas Havard, a freeholder of Lanywern. Although the baptism records for the three girls do not specify the mother's name Benjamin is believed to have been married to Elizabeth (surname unknown) who is mentioned as the wife of Benjamin in the burial records of Llanfihangel Tallylyn church but no formal marriage has been traced and we therefore know nothing of Elizabeth except that she died in 1811.

Benjamin's father Thomas probably married Sibil Jones at Llanywern in 1734 and whilst a marriage bond has been found a formal register entry to confirm the marriage took place is proving difficult to pin down.² The BTs for Lanywern are missing for the year 1734 and the scans of the original pages are almost illegible. But, numerous children were baptised at Llanywern to a Thomas Havard fitting in with this marriage date suggesting that he probably is the Thomas

Benjamin Havard's signature on his father's Bond in 1771

Benjamin Havard's signature at the marriage of his daughter Margaret

who was bonded to marry Sible Jones. The couple remained in the parish after their marriage and seven children are recorded in the register; Margaret (1735), Thomas (1737), John (1739), Benjamin (1741),

Joseph (1743), Rees (1745) and David (1750). Sons Benjamin and John appear as witnesses to the Bond recording their father's death in 1771 where John is specified as Thomas's son and of Newport, Pembrokeshire.³ Although Benjamin is not specifically noted as a son on the document his signature bears a strong similarity to that found in the marriage register entry for his daughter Margaret. What John was doing in Pembrokeshire is not known although at this time there were a number of Havard families living there involved in the ship building trade which was booming at this time. Between 1760 and 1830 more than 80 ships were built on the banks of the Nevern at Newport with timber coming from the Baltic.⁴ One John Havard was a renowned shipbuilder during this period and supervised the building of ships at both Newport, Pembrokeshire and Newport, Monmouthshire. Unfortunately this John was born in 1770 and died 1839 so the dates do not add up. However, it is possible that there is family link somewhere which encouraged our John Havard to leave Breconshire and move to Pembrokeshire.

Benjamin's sister Margaret married David Price the vicar of Merthy Cynog. Their marriage took place on 10 August 1758 at Merthyr Cynog. It's believed they had at least eight children although the available records of Merthyr Cynog are patchy and no scans of the early registers are available online. In 1764 David became the incumbent at St Padarn's Church, Llanbadarn Fawr in Cardiganshire. He did not live long and died at age 49 in 1774. He is buried in the

Baptism of Pryse Powell Price at St Padarn, Llanbadarn Fawr, 1769

churchyard with two of his children, Elizabeth and (Anna) Magdalena who was one of two children baptised at Llanbadarn she in 1771, the other being Pryse Powell Price in 1769. Whilst David and Margaret's life was unremarkable her son David went on to be an esteemed soldier and traveller and was latterly known as the great Orientalist

whilst David's cousin Benjamin, son of Isaac Price and a nephew of David Price senior was the first Bishop of the Free Church of England although the records to prove this have not been found.



Rev. Benjamin Price

After her husband's death Margaret returned to Breconshire a widow with eight children to support. She died in 1776 and is buried at Llanfihangel where a tablet in the chancel of the church memorialises her life and death.

Aside from John, Benjamin and Margaret none of Thomas Havard's other children have been traceable. It does not help that there are numerous Havards all with the same first names making it hard to decide which might, if any, be the right one. Further work will need to be done to build a tree of this Havard branch.

Meanwhile, Margaret's niece, daughter to her brother Benjamin, was living simply in the village at Llanfihangel Talylyn with husband Roger and daughter Ann who was recorded in the 1851 census as disabled from birth. In the 1841 census his age is noted as 80 and Margaret's at 65. Still a fifteen year gap although Roger is now born 1761 and Margaret in 1776 which illustrates how ages have been mis-noted or misunderstood. Ten years later in 1851 they are living at Hemley Hall Cottage, Llanfihangel where Roger is noted as 97 (b.1754) and Margaret 84 (b. 1767). Ages were rounded down to the nearest five

years in the 1841 census so Roger could have been over 80 at this time and Margaret over 65. In many ways it is unimportant once we have determined issues such as birth, baptism and marriage but it would be far more helpful if enumerators had collected the exact age as given by the person about which they were recording information. It is interesting that Roger and Margaret have a stone in the churchyard at Llanfihangel given that in the 1851 census they are listed as paupers.

In the 1851 Census the couple are living in Hemley Hall cottage which is described by British Listed Buildings as a rare two roomed 16th century grade II listed cottage with attached barn situated just outside Llanfihangel on the road to Llandyfaelog Tre'r graig, north of Llangihangel adjacent to Neuadd and east of Llanfihangel. On the tithe map there is no entry for a Hemley Hall Cottage only Hemley Hall Farm, owned by Hugh Bold and occupied by Lewis Jenkin. The property however, does include a number of buildings including a Homestead Cottage, Upper and Lower Hall and the Grange. The 1861 and 71 censuses do not record a Hemley Hall Cottage only Hemley Hall itself and in these censuses the property falls within the census returns for the village of Llanfihangel Talylyn not Llanfihangel. Maybe Hugh Bold allowed Roger and Margaret to live in one of the properties within Hemley Hall Farm and this is why it is enumerated specifically in the 1851 census. That the family could afford gravestones one wonders why their parents ended up as paupers reliant on the village for support.

Both Margaret's sisters Ann and Elizabeth are also buried in the churchyard at Llanfihangel Talylyn even though they had both moved to Brecon at some point. Ann never married and it's possible she moved to be near her sister Elizabeth and husband William. In the 1841 census she is found living of independent means in the non-parochial parish of Christ's Church, Brecon.

Elizabeth Havard married William Watkins a road surveyor of Brecon. They had at least six children three of whom died in infancy and Thomas, as a teenager. William, the last child was baptised at the Struet Methodist Chapel, Brecon in 1810 and appears to have survived to adulthood as did Benjamin baptised in 1812.

Hereford Journal 28 July 1824. p.3

Benjamin also became a road surveyor as he is found living with his father in St Mary, Brecon in 1841 and is listed as such. His marriage registry entry to Mary Jones at Llanidloes also notes his occupation as civil engineer whilst his father is noted as a County Surveyor.⁶ He does not appear in the 1851 census but an entry on page 3 of the Patriot of 28th March 1842 tells us why; he died at Cheltenham where he had gone for his health. He was brought back to, and buried, at Llangihangel Talylyn but there is no memorial stone existing. His wife, Mary had lost "her only" child Hugh at only 4 months in 1839⁷, bore a daughter in 1841 who subsequently died⁸ but delivered a second child, a daughter,

March 19, at Cheltenham, to which place he had gone for the benefit of his health, Benjamin Watkins, Esq., of Brecon, aged 29, after a protracted and debilitating illness, which he bore with true Christian composure and patient resignation. He will be long and sincerely regretted by a numerous circle of friends. The Calvinistic Methodists, to which religious denomination he belonged, and of which he was one of the brightest ornaments, have sustained by his death an irreparable loss. On the 23rd, his mortal remains, having been previously removed from Cheltenham to Brecon, were interred in the family vault at Llanfihangel.

without recompense. The Statement of Income and Expenditure for the year 1840 records the salary as £250 which today would be somewhere around £18,000.¹⁰ It might explain how the family had the money to afford a Memorial stone in the churchyard. Whilst Roger and Margaret's daughter Elizabeth Watkins seems to have afforded her own memorial who might have paid for theirs is more of a mystery as both William and Elizabeth Watkins pre-deceased Roger and Margaret. Perhaps there was money passed on them although no Will has been found for William.

Elizabeth was only 44yrs old when she died in 1814. William lived a further thirty five years dying in 1849. His death

notice records him as a road surveyor for 45 years, a member of the Calvinistic Method Connexion for 60 years and a Deacon for 50 yrs. He is buried with

Hereford Journal 7 November 1849 p.3

Elizabeth at Llanfihangel Tallylyn. His death notice in the Hereford Journal states he had been a staunch Methodist for most of his life so why as a Deacon in the Calvinistic Method Connexion William and his family were buried in Llanfihangel Tallylyn is also a mystery unless there were no burial grounds connected with Methodism which would have been suitable.

ORDINATION SERVICES.—The ordination services of Mr. Samuel Prosser, of the Brecon Independent College, were held on June 24th and 25th, at the Independent Chapel, Rhayader. On the evening of the first-named day the Rev. T. Evans, Talgarth, preached, and on the following morning the Rev. Professor Roberts, of Brecon, delivered a sermon on "The nature and constitution of a Christian Church." The Rev. T. Evans asked the usual questions, which were satisfactorily answered, after which the Rev. J. Stephens, Brychgoed, offered the ordination prayer, and the Rev. Professor Morris delivered the charge to the newly-ordained minister. The Rev. Dr. Rees, of Swansea, afterwards preached to the church and congregation. In the afternoon and evening the Revs. Dr. Rees Stephens, and Griffiths, of Troedriwdalar, preached.

Brecon County Times 4 July 1868. p.8

married Elizabeth Jones and looked after his disabled sister, Ann after his parents death. John and Elizabeth had 3 children; David, John and Thomas. David we know moved to Aberdare and became a miner and in 1881 his mother Elizabeth is found living with him after the death of her husband, John. Elizabeth died in 1886 and her body was returned to Breconshire where she lies in the churchyard at Llanfihangel Tallylyn alongside her husband and her son, John who died in 1865.

Roger married Ann Price at Merthyr Cynog in 1832, eventually moving to Tredegar in Monmouthshire. Both Roger and Ann died around 1851. They had four children, John born in Merthyr Cynog and baptised at Ebenezer Chapel, William, Thomas and Margaret. They have also been difficult to track although we do find Thomas living in Pontypridd in 1881 married to wife Hannah with three children Roger, Margaret and Amy. He is listed as coalminer and publican.

It is a pity that none of the documents which would help to track poorer families has been routinely digitised. Church warden reports, poor law reports and other relevant village minutiae would perhaps help to pin down the

only weeks before her husband's death.⁹ The newspaper notice does not indicate the name of the child and so far both Mary and the child have not been subsequently traced in the census for 1851 nor the child in any baptism records. William's work as a County surveyor of roads and bridges was not

notice records him as a road surveyor for 45 years, a member of the Calvinistic Method Connexion for 60 years and a Deacon for 50 yrs. He is buried with

The seam of Methodism seem to have continued sporadically in the family. Jumping a generation Roger and Margaret Prosser's grandson, Samuel became a Methodist Minister. Having trained at Brecon he moved to Rhayader in 1868 remaining there until 1896 when he moved to Painscastle. His gravestone records that he was the minister at Rhayader for 27 years but was also Secretary of the Rhayader Auxiliary of the British and Foreign Bible Society for 33 years. He died in 1901 and is buried in the graveyard of the United Reformed Chapel at Rhayader.

Roger and Margaret also had John b. 1796) and Roger (b. 1809). John remained in Llanfihangel Tallylyn having

individual members of each family especially given there are so many with the same surname who may or may not be related in some way. As it is it's only those with some level of wealth who appear in the majority of documents that have been digitised and even the local newspapers are not interested in the pauper members of the community unless they are involved in activities of a nefarious nature!

Sue Ashton
Newsletter Editor BLFHS

SOURCES

1. <http://www.monmouthcastlemuseum-archives.org.uk/regsearch.php>
2. Havard, Thomas, gent, Llan-y-wern, Breconshire to Jones, Sibill, sp., Llanafan Fawr, Breconshire: 1734 Apr. 20. National Library of Wales (NLW). Marriage Bonds.
3. Thomas Havard. Bond 1772. NLW.
4. Maritime History of Newport. Tom Bennett. Privately Published, 2017 (available from Amazon and the author's own website at <https://www.tom-bennett-shipwrecks.com/store-1/maritime-history-of-newport>)
5. Benjamin Price: Dictionary of Welsh Biography. NLW
6. North Wales Chronicle and Advertiser 25.7.1837.p.3
7. Glamorgan. Monmouth and Brecon Gazette. 2.11.1839. p3
8. Hereford Journal. 6.9.1843. p.3
9. Hereford Journal. 16.2.1842. p.3
10. Glamorgan. Monmouth and Brecon Gazette. 3.1.1841. p.1



Sport in Brecon: FIVES

The Gentry class of Georgian Brecon amused themselves by playing various sports. One of these was "FIVES", a ball game played on a three- or four-sided special court. The ball was propelled against the walls using a gloved or bare hand, rackets and boards.

An ambitious Advertisement Bill exists of a challenge put out by the Brecon Fives players:

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. This newsletter: Sport in Brecon

"BRECKNOCK AGAINST ALL BRITAIN!

Brecon Castle Fives Court.

There are Two Men in the Town of Brecon, who will Play a RUBBER OF FIVES with Battleboards, in the Court at Brecon Castle, against any Two Men in the Kingdom, for ONE HUNDRED GUINEAS. – They will likewise Play any Three Men that were born and bred in any County of Great Britain, for another HUNDRED GUINEAS.

One of them will Play any Man in the Nation for TWO HUNDRED GUINEAS.

If any would wish to accept either of the above Challenges, they may apply to Mr Jones, at the Castle aforesaid.

It is allowed to be as Fair an enclosed Court as any in England.

March 10, 1786

BRECKNOCK, PRINTED BY W. AND G. NORTH

We know the names of two Brecon-based players who took part in a FIVES competition in Ludlow, also in 1786.

A MATCH AT FIVES.

To be Played in the Fives-Court, at Ludlow, on Wednesday the 30th of August, (being the second race-day) A MATCH at FIVES, for FIFTY GUINEAS, between John Harris, of Ludlow, and his Partner, on one side, and John Lilwill and John Davies, of Brecon, on the other side —To begin at nine o'clock."

[Hereford Journal - 24 August 1786]

Visitors to Brecon often wrote Diaries of their observations. Here are some examples of their experience of Fives.

The Hon. John Byng's "Torrington Diaries" [Vol I] describes his visit to Brecon in 1787, and the ruined Brecon Castle site:

"nothing now remains but a small bastion, at the hill top, where stood Ely Tower, the area is converted into a bowling green; and the old hall which fronts the bridge, forms one side of a five's court."

Thomas Mytton, in his visit to Brecon on Sunday, 30th June 1776, wrote

"A great concourse of both sexes and of all ages were assembled to see the young men at play at Fives against the castle wall."

And this on a Sunday!

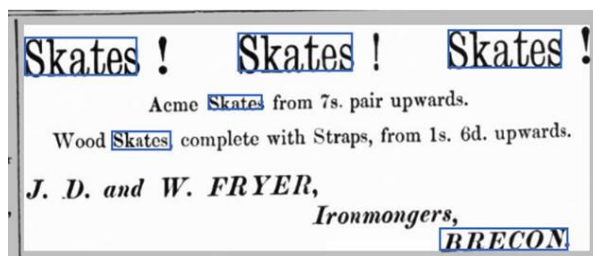


target for many cameras. On Sunday Newton Pool was negotiable for the first time this season for skating, and large numbers of Breconians betook themselves to this extensive sheet of ice. There was also good skating on the Brecon and Newport Canal, and Llangorse Lake, although not safely negotiable in the central parts, afforded an extensive area for skaters round the shore parts. The thermometer registered 15 degrees of frost on Saturday night, and 9 degrees at mid-day on Sunday. But on Monday morning a violent change came, the temperature went up rapidly, the wind changed to the south-west, and those who bought a new pair of skate on Saturday were crestfallen.

[Picture shows Newton Pool in 1940s]

Ice skating in Brecon - January 1908

The Frost — The weir at Newton Pool on Thursday morning presented a unique sight. The icy east wind had frozen the water to such a degree that the whole of the river for the time being was held back by a barrier of ice. When the centre of this ice wall broke, the water rushed through and left the ice standing on the edge of the weir to about a height of three or four feet. This presented a very strange sight and was the



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Family Search

Family Search have slowly been adding images of various documents to its database. Some of these documents such as Marriage Bonds are not yet available on the commercial sites and whilst the images are not indexed it is possible to page through them and look at them individually if searching for a particular document. With Marriage Bonds there is an index on the National Library of Wales site which would help to pin down a particular Bond with its date and parish enabling you to look for the images on Family Search. Other types of documents covered include Probate and Official Court Records.

Search the database at www.familysearch.org/

Website Report – to 16th November 2021

Month	Unique visitors	Number of visits	Pages	Hits
Jan-21	756	1,113	4,107	16,355
Feb-21	701	1,025	4,068	15,184
Mar-21	783	1,082	3,836	14,666
Apr-21	685	1,086	3,812	11,993
May-21	739	1,008	3,773	12,068
Jun-21	728	1,059	4,238	11,947
Jul-21	717	1,023	3,240	11,698
Aug-21	767	1,124	2,917	10,842
Sep-21	589	823	2,697	7,889
Oct-21	878	1,124	3,442	11,232
Nov-21	479	580	2,011	6,626
Dec-21	0	0	0	0
Total	7,822	11,047	38,141	130,500
To 16th November 2021				



An eighteenth century version of a scam!

PROSECUTION FOR WITCHCRAFT IN 1789 AT THE BRECONSHIRE QUARTER SESSIONS.

Thomas Daniel, of Ystradfellte, having noticed that the milk of his father's cows was in the course of last summer of a very extraordinary appearance, he believed it to be affected by witchcraft. Accordingly he went, by his father's orders, to the defendant, Daniel Jones, at Llanafau Fawr, who immediately said it was the effect of witchcraft, and that he would prevent it. (76) The next morning the defendant looked into a book, and then told witness to take some hair of the cow's tail, etc., and to boil the same with salt, and while this was doing, to permit no person to remain in the house but himself. Then he was to bury it by a stile near a particular woman's house; and defendant gave witness a paper to put over the door of the dairy. For this, witness gave defendant 5s. Witness then went to him again, and he promised he would be sure to put the milk right, and that he should see who did the mischief to it. Then he again looked into his book, and described the person of a woman, who, he said, was the witch. Defendant again directed the witness to use the same charm as before, and with the addition of two horse-shoes, having three nails in each of them. Witness then paid defendant 2s. Qd. This having failed in success, defendant said he must be on the spot before he could effect the cure; and fixed a time to be at his father's house, desiring witness to inform the neighbours of his coming, and that he could tell fortunes and recover lost and stolen goods. Defendant afterwards came to his father's house, and remained there four days; during which he pretended, by various means having generally a book before him to find out the witch. He said there was a conjuring book of his at Glynllech, which he would give five guineas to have restored to him. The result of the trial is not given in the old paper, but the jurors presented a True Bill

HISTORICAL MEMORANDA OF BRECONSHIRE. A COLLECTION OF PAPERS FROM VARIOUS SOURCES RELATING TO THE HISTORY OF THE COUNTY. II. BY JOHN LLOYD. LONDON: PRINTED BY THE BEDFORD PRESS, 20 & 21, BEDFORDBURY, W.C. 1904.



Brecknock History Forum – Festival September 2022

The focus of the Festival for this year will be Sacred Places.
Further information will follow in later Newsletters

Future Meetings

Meetings for the foreseeable future have been cancelled in the light of developments around the “Covid-19” virus. This situation is constantly under review and we will let members know as soon as we have agreed a plan for moving forward.

Committee members have continued to communicate with each other via telephone, email and Zoom, ensuring that the Society continues to function at this time.

We can but hope that things will continue to improve in the next weeks and months.

Meeting Reports

Addendum to our AGM 2021 Report

At the AGM we were delighted to welcome a new member of the Committee, Graham Prosser. Although he lives some distance from Brecon we hope to be able to arrange a Zoom link for future Committee meetings so he will be able to take an active part. At the present Graham is working on an index of our newsletters which will enable members to more easily find information within them. When completed the index will be available on our website.

You don't need to be local to take part in the Society's activities. As newsletter editor I live quite some way from Breconshire (Nottinghamshire to be exact!) but with the advent of Zoom I have been able to take part in meetings and get to know Committee members more fully.

Face to face meetings have been suspended for the time being due to the Covid-19 virus. The situation is in constant review and we will advise when we are able to begin meetings again.

Website. We intend to review the situation once the Covid rules are clear.

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

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 lead 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

Thankyou – Sue Ashton. Newsletter Editor