

Cymdeithas Brycheiniog a Chyfeillion yr Amgueddfa
Brecknock Society and Museum Friends
(Charity Number 518041)
Newsletter August 2020

From the Chairman, John Gibbs (01874 730747 or chair@brecknocksociety.co.uk)

Introduction

As we know only too well, Covid-19 has cast a long shadow over community life. During the last six months, it has greatly influenced the way in which this Society operates but all is not gloom! There has been a re-opening of y Gaer, albeit in a limited way. We have initiated the production of a series of lively electronic publications and I know from the Editor of Brycheiniog that he is very pleased with the diversity and quality of the papers being offered for the next volume. A studentship to build on Sister Bonaventure's pioneering research on the Brecon theatre has been successfully launched and we are closely involved with an important series of lectures and conferences planned for 2021.

Keeping in touch. Apart from these twice-yearly Newsletters, we seek to use email to keep our members in touch with matters of interest relating to the Society and its aims and objectives. The BS&MF website is a great source of information and I would urge you to check 'What's New on the Website' on the website's Home Page frequently – even if you are not normally a great user of computers or smart phones (the web address is at the foot of this letter).

BS&MF 2020 Annual General Meeting: An invitation to participate

A postponement of the AGM planned for April inevitably followed the Government's announcement of lockdown. While the AGM provides a much valued opportunity for discussion and the dissemination of information, the two required actions are a) the approval of the accounts for the previous year and b) the election of Officers and Council members.

With Covid-19 continuing to pose constraints, we are, via this Newsletter, inviting you to participate by:

- i) using a postal vote (post or e-mail) to vote on motions relating to the required actions
- ii) attending a virtual AGM (by Zoom) on Thursday October 15th at 4.00pm. At this meeting the results of the postal votes will be announced and other BS&MF business conducted.

To enable you to take part in the voting, we will be sending you a letter on or soon after September 15th which will contain the audited accounts, information on the candidates for election and the postal vote forms.

In this connection, it is important for me to give you some information on the position with respect to Officers and Council members.

During the winter both Gwyneth Evans (Secretary to the Executive Council) and Elizabeth Siberry (Membership Secretary) announced their intention to stand down at April's AGM. I am sure that I speak for the Society as a whole when I say how grateful we are to them for the effective, sensitive and imaginative way in which they have undertaken their responsibilities. The Council was very pleased to learn that Sophie Clubb and Liz Bickerton were prepared to take on these roles, and it wishes to propose that they are elected to these positions. The other Officers are prepared to continue in their roles for another year and a motion to this effect also needs to be put to the vote.

When it comes to Members of the Council, election is for four years. It is likely that there will be two vacancies and the Council would like to bring forward the names of Beryl Gibson and John Underwood.

If there are any other nominations for any of these positions, please let me know by Sept 10th (my contact details are at the head of this Newsletter). This will allow time for the names to be included on the voting forms being sent out later in the month.

The agenda for the virtual AGM on October 15th, together with information on how to participate, will be included in the mailing of mid-September.

Brecknock Museum & Art Gallery and Brecon Library at y Gaer

We were very pleased that the Museum and Art Gallery re-opened on Fridays and Saturdays from July 31st. At the time of writing, the opening times are 10 am to 1pm and 1.30 pm to 4pm. As you will know, and thanks very much to the unswerving efforts of Mervyn Bramley, the Society played a key role as a local funding partner in the successful creation of y Gaer. We now consider it to be vital that a partnership system be put in place that will allow us, along with other local champions and volunteers, to assist Powys County Council's y Gaer staff in the operation of the building and in ensuring that it achieves its potential both to serve members of the community and visitors to the area. We fully recognise that the Covid-19 pandemic has created uncertain and demanding times for Powys County Council but we are firm in our view that the momentum must be maintained.

2020 Brycheiniog

This year's volume came out in March and is agreed to be of outstanding interest. With the postponement or cancellation of our meetings, opportunities for sales have been greatly reduced. If you do not have a copy – or would like an additional one for friend or relative, please contact the Editor Mike Williams at mike.williams@brecknocksociety.co.uk. Information on the contents can be found at <https://brecknocksociety.co.uk/resources/brycheiniog/>.

The Society's Programme

The BS&MF programme for the year beginning April 2020 onwards was to have included a series of sessions in the Brecknock Museum & Art Gallery at which different exhibits/ displays would have been brought into focus. This would have linked in with the Interpretation Project being run by the Society (for details see <https://brecknocksociety.co.uk/our-work/brecknock-museum/interpretation-project/>). Thus a morning on the exhibits of the Roman period was planned for a Saturday in May with a possible afternoon visit to Brecon Gaer - the Roman fort at Aberyscir. Another session would have focused on the Courtroom etc.

Inevitably these plans have had to be put on hold but, in conjunction with Museum & Art Gallery staff we are hoping to have a virtual meeting in the autumn that will feature short presentations on items from the Collections by members of the Interpretation Project team.

A new venture: The Society's e-papers.

Back in the spring, and as a boost to morale, we decided produce a series of e-papers at monthly intervals. These, as I trust most of you are well aware, have been sent round as e-mail attachments and are now posted on our website at <https://brecknocksociety.co.uk/brecknock-log-brecknock-society-and-museum-friends-occasional-papers/>. The first two papers linked in to the Interpretation project and described exhibits in the Museum & Art Gallery relating to Sarah Siddons. The third covered the link between the original Brecon Theatre and charitable causes, while the fourth focused on Llanhamlach Church, a significant landmark in the Breconshire countryside. The fifth paper is in process of publication. It describes a late 19th C watercolour featuring the old Brecon jail and tells the story of a controversy over conditions in the jail at about the time that the picture was painted.

Current plans for 2021

Covid conditions permitting, the position for next year is looking very interesting and involves several collaborative ventures with other bodies:

'A Pretty Castle and a Fair Place': The conservation and interpretation of Tretower Court and Castle. The postponed 23rd Sir John Lloyd Memorial Lecture to be given by Dr David Robinson has been rearranged for Friday March 12th 2021. It is planned that David will lead a tour of Tretower for BS&MF members on the following day.

‘Bright shoots of everlastingness: Poetry, Spirituality and the Natural World’. May 7th-9th. This is a conference to celebrate the work of Henry Vaughan, George Herbert and Thomas Traherne. It will mark the 400th anniversary of the birth of Henry Vaughan and his brother Thomas, the occult philosopher and alchemist. The BS&MF plans to partner the Vaughan Association in this venture.

Convivium Conference 2021 ‘Inhabiting Memories & Landscapes’. Mid-June. The BS&MF hopes to act as a partner to the Cathedral in this event which takes as its theme the importance of an understanding of local landscapes and heritage for spiritual well-being.

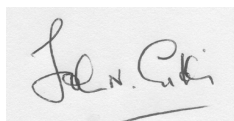
‘The history of Welsh and English in Brycheiniog’. July 9th. This is a special lecture to the BS&MF by David Willis, the recently-appointed Professor of Celtic at Jesus College, Oxford. It marks the links between Jesus College and Wales.

The Sister Bonaventure Kelleher Theatre Studentship

It is good to be able to write very positively about this venture. Jayne Gold, who holds the Studentship, is showing great initiative in her research (she is the author of the e-paper on Brecon Theatre mentioned above). She has written a blog for her department at Bristol University which provides a lively insight into her life as a research worker (<https://uobtheatre.blogs.bristol.ac.uk/2020/06/09/the-archival-resident-in-lockdown/>). We are in discussions with the Brecon Town Council and others about an event to promote the project at a date yet to be determined.

Brecon Heritage and Cultural Network

The Society is a partner in this initiative, led by the cathedral, which seeks to integrate the activities of the various bodies and organisations operating in and around Brecon so as so as to promote its rich heritage, culture and artistic life. It has an attractive web-site which has some good local stories to tell (<http://breconstory.wales/home>).



John Gibbs

Website: www.brecknocksociety.co.uk