

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

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

**'y Gaer' Brecknock Museum & Art Gallery and Brecon Library**

It is now two months since the 'soft opening' of y Gaer and there is wide recognition that it is a wonderful building - delighting the eye and stimulating the imagination. It effectively combines the old and the new, and, as library, museum and art gallery, makes a whole that has the potential to be a great deal more than the sum of its parts. At the same time, it remains, in many respects, a work in progress rather than the finished article! The contractors Kier are still on site completing the sandstone cladding on the new part of the building and dealing with the last of the snagging. Work is still needed in the Museum and Art Gallery on the labelling of exhibits and commissioning the touch-screen electronic displays: this last the responsibility of Blackbox-av, the suppliers of the equipment. In March, we expect the atrium café to be opening and the dedicated y Gaer website to be operational - the web address is [www.ygaerpowys.org.uk](http://www.ygaerpowys.org.uk). The date of formal opening of y Gaer has yet to be announced.

I would like to refer to the Vision Statement agreed by all the partners last year. 'We commit ourselves to a model partnership project with many funders supporting this nationally important development and with local partners and volunteers working alongside council staff to deliver services for the community and provide a welcome to visitors from near and far'. Specifically, for the Brecknock Society, we have pledged ourselves to assist Powys County Council in the creation of a sustainable future for y Gaer both with income and with contributions in kind.

When it comes to 'contribution in kind' a key element is volunteering : a good number of members of our Society have become volunteers in the Museum and Art gallery and are very much enjoying the experience! If you feel that this is something with which you can help, do please get in touch with me or call in at y Gaer for an application form.

Museum and Art Gallery Subcommittee. Over many years, we have benefitted greatly from the enormous amount of work on the project that Mervyn Bramley has put in as the first point of contact between the Society and Powys County Council. Now that y Gaer has opened, we have considered it important to establish a new subcommittee that will help to share the responsibilities for dealing with what will become a major part of the Society's overall activity. The creation of such a group will also help the Society to link into and influence the emerging structures that are being developed for the management of y Gaer. These will not be fully complete until Powys County Council has decided on which further partner(s) it brings into y Gaer.

Events in y Gaer. During the coming year many of the events organised by the Society will focus on the Museum and Art Gallery, so do look out for the information that we will be putting out by email, on the website and as posters.

**The Sister Bonaventure Kelleher Theatre Studentship**

In the last Newsletter I described our plans to establish a doctoral studentship at the University of Bristol to take forward Sister Bonaventure's research on the history of the theatre in Brecon. These plans have come to fruition and a very well-qualified student, Jayne Gold, has been appointed. She has an excellent academic background and lives locally. Dr Catherine Hindson, Reader in Theatre History, has said '*I am delighted to be supervising Jayne Gold's research project on Brecon's rich theatrical history, alongside my colleague Professor Elaine McGirr. The research and eventual publications will secure Sister Bonaventure Kelleher's place in the study of theatre history.*'

The Ursuline order will cover one third of the costs and we will be committing some of our own funds, in appreciation of Sister Bonaventure's work on behalf of the Society. We are making application to some charitable trusts and will also be approaching the many people in and around Breconshire whose lives she touched.

## **'A Pretty Castle and a Fair Place'The conservation and interpretation of Tretower Court and Castle**

The 23<sup>rd</sup> Sir John Lloyd Memorial Lecture will be given by Dr David Robinson at 7 p.m. in Theatre Brycheiniog, Brecon on Friday 20<sup>th</sup> March 2020. The group of buildings found at Tretower is one of the most remarkable in Wales. In 1930 the late medieval court was saved for the nation by the Brecknock Society and in 1947 the twelfth-century castle was taken into the care of the State.

Dr Robinson is an architectural historian whose interest in Tretower has developed over several decades. His lecture will look at the conservation work at both buildings, and at the various interpretations placed on them by different generations of historians. As usual tickets are free but they must be booked via the Theatre Box Office (01874611622) or [www.theatrbrycheiniog.co.uk](http://www.theatrbrycheiniog.co.uk). Tickets are going quickly, so I advise you to book soon if you have not yet done so. Unless you call in person or send a stamped addressed envelope, the tickets will be held for collection on the night.

If, having made a booking, you find that you cannot come, do please contact the Box Office to release the seat so that it can be taken by someone else. There will be a retiring collection in aid of the BS&MF's educational work.

There will be a meal after the lecture in the Theatre Bistro. This year there will be a choice of a two-course meal or a light supper. For more information on the menu or to make a reservation, please contact Elaine Starling (01874 711484 or [evistarling@gmail.com](mailto:evistarling@gmail.com)) by March 12<sup>th</sup>.

Tour of Tretower for BS&MF members. As an additional attraction, for members of the Society only, Dr Robinson will be leading a tour round Tretower Court and Castle on the morning of Saturday 21<sup>st</sup> of March. Numbers will be restricted to 25 and if you would like to book a place, please contact Elaine Starling.

### **2020 Brycheiniog**

This year's volume will be out in March, containing, *inter alia*, the written version of Professor Prys Morgan's memorable Sir John Lloyd lecture on Theophilus Jones and his history of Brecknock. It promises to be a fascinating issue and we thank our Editor Mike Williams for all his hard work in putting it together.

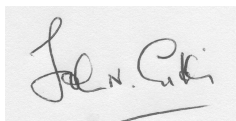
### **BS&MF Annual General Meeting**

It was originally announced that our AGM would be at 2.30pm on Monday April 20<sup>th</sup>. There is a strong feeling that with y Gaer being open we should hold the meeting there, but the building is currently closed on a Monday. We have therefore pursued the idea of a move to the following day - Tuesday April 21<sup>st</sup>, again at 2.30pm.

Notice of the date, time and place will be contained in the formal invitation which will be issued in a few weeks time. In the meantime, however, I would like to mention that, with impending changes in the membership of the Executive Council and with the creation of the new Museum and Art Gallery Sub-committee, there will be a range of opportunities for involvement in the work of the society. If this is something in which you would be interested, do please get in touch to find out more (my BS&MF email address is at the top of the letter).

### **Annual Memorial Service for Henry Vaughan**

This year's annual service to commemorate the death of Breconshire's renowned poet and physician Henry Vaughan will be held at Llansantffraed Church on Sunday April 26<sup>th</sup> at 3.00pm. The choral evensong is jointly-organised by Llansantffraed Church, The Vaughan Association and the Society, and sung by the Choir of St Marys' Priory Church, Abergavenny. The address will be given by Dr Robert Wilcher, co-editor of the recently-published complete edition of the poetry and prose of Henry Vaughan. The service will be followed by the traditional laying of wreaths at Vaughan's grave and refreshments in the church.



John Gibbs

Website: [www.brecknocksociety.co.uk](http://www.brecknocksociety.co.uk)