

BRYCHEINIOG

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Edited by
E. G. PARRY

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THE BRECKNOCK SOCIETY
and
MUSEUM FRIENDS

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NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

Brynach Parri was born in Brecon and works as a court interpreter on the Wales and Chester circuit. He is currently doing further research on the early history of Breconshire.

The Rev. Herbert Hughes retired to Llanddew where Giraldus Cambrensis lived as Archdeacon of Brecon; his latest book, on Howell Harris, was published (in Welsh) in 2006.

David Stephenson is Honorary Research Fellow in Welsh History at the University of Wales, Bangor; he is currently writing on the medieval kingdoms and lordships of Powys and Arwystli.

After a career in educational administration Tony Bell retired as Assistant Director of Education for Powys in 1993. He has been involved with the Brecknock Society for many years and is currently Treasurer.

Richard Moore-Colyer is Emeritus Professor of Agrarian History at the University of Wales and the author of many books and articles; he is currently working on a biography of Henry Rolf Gardiner, poet, landowner and early environmentalist.

David Moore was Curator of the Brecknock Museum & Art Gallery from 1992 to 2006; he is now working as an independent researcher and consultant in the visual arts with a particular interest in Wales.

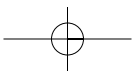
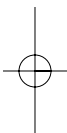
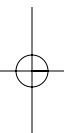
EDITORIAL

The Sir John Lloyd Memorial lecture lived up to the high expectations we now assume for this annual event; Richard Moore-Colyer gave the large audience many insights into how the Second World War affected the lives of men, women and children in the county. I am grateful to him for making the text of the lecture available for publication. The end of the war saw the sale of the remaining parts of the Camden estates in Breconshire; Tony Bell has made extensive use of the voluminous Camden papers at Maidstone to explain the significant role played by the family in the history of the area over two hundred and fifty years.

The medieval history of Breconshire is the subject of three very different articles. Brynach Parri investigates the 'lost' border kingdom of Fferig in those murky centuries which saw the emergence of Brycheiniog; the use of placenames helps to fill the gaps left by the absence of written evidence. Giraldus Cambrensis's Breconshire connections are well known but Herbert Hughes provides a wider context for the resident of Llanddew and places him in the Europe of kings and popes. David Stephenson's close reading of an early thirteenth century charter from Arwystli sheds a fascinating light on the contemporary political infighting between Marcher lords, Welsh princes and English kings.

The combined title of Brecknock Museum and Art Gallery reflects the work of David Moore as Curator; the promotion of Welsh art by a programme of exhibitions and purchases is described in his illustrated article. The reports from Powys Archives and the two Brecon museums reflect the extent and range of resources available to those investigating local history; the new curator of the Brecknock Museum and Art Gallery, Kate Hebditch, provides the first of what we hope will be many such reports.

This volume of *Brycheiniog* was supported by grants from Powys County Council, Brecon Town Council and the Brecknock Museum Art Trust for which the Society is very grateful.



BRECKNOCK MUSEUM AND ART GALLERY CURATOR'S REPORT

The Museum Development

In 2004 Powys County Council was awarded a Project Planning Grant by the Heritage Lottery Fund and employed consultants to carry out an Audience Development Plan and a Conservation Management Plan for the Museum. At the turn of 2005/2006 the consultants (John Marjoram and Halahan Associates) presented their reports, which give a sound basis for planning the future developments. The Conservation Management Plan gives much useful information on the state of the museum buildings and the collections and their historical value, and stresses the need for considerable investment in building restoration. The Audience Development Plan looks at the Museum's current audience and how that might be broadened. An Access Audit was also carried out.

It is hoped that the County Council will soon progress with a bid to the Heritage Lottery Fund, although there is a pause in the project at present while the Council considers all its property assets in Brecon and elsewhere in Powys.

Collections

Work has progressed with the conversion of the lower floor of the Old Police Station in Captain's Walk into stores and offices. The art collections have been transferred into new stores in the old cells there, which is an improvement on their environmental conditions.

Thanks to the generosity of the Brecknock Society and Museum Friends, we have been able to purchase new storage cabinets. These are being used for some of the archaeology and textile collections and are a huge improvement on the previous storage.

Annette Lewis (formerly Zimmerman) continues to make improvements to the storage and to catalogue the collection onto the MODES database. About 80% of the collection is now on the database.

Objects accessioned into the collections during 2006 are listed at the end of this report.

Public services

The large exhibition gallery was out of action throughout part of 2006, due to a severe leak in the roof. A secondary roof has been put in above the void which

was causing the problem, and the gallery re-opened on 29 July. Three successful exhibitions were held in the latter part of 2006; *Wire and Wool*, a group exhibition by Lynn Walters, Jean Roberts and Pat Johnson, *Smocks, Smocking, Smocked*, a touring exhibition from Hereford Museum and Art Gallery which included some of our own material, and *Carbon Cycle*, paintings by Tim Rossiter which explored the relationship between the life forms of our world and the star dust of which we are all made.

The small exhibition gallery has not suffered from the same roof problems and was in use throughout the year. Exhibitions held were *Thank You for Your Help*, an exhibition of works purchased with the help of grant giving bodies such as the V & A Purchase Fund and the Brecknock Society, *the Story of Story-telling, Breconshire Photographed – 150 Years*, which showed many of the photographs in the collection, an exhibition for National Archaeology Week, *Topographical Prints of Breconshire*, 'A Busy Bee' – sewing for the household, and a craft exhibition. The exhibition of Breconshire photographs proved enormously popular and resulted in additional information and gifts of photographs for the collections. The 'Busy Bee' exhibition was included in the *Times*' list of 'top five exhibitions' in October.

Events held included a Family History Surgery in conjunction with the Powys Archives Service, a Finds ID day held during National Archaeology week, the *Big Draw* and the launch of the new Powys branch of the Art Fund. Tim Rossiter spent a week in the gallery during his exhibition, creating a new work and talking to visitors.

The Museum continues to be popular with schools. It is hoped that education work will be developed substantially in 2007. As usual, the staff of the Museum identified a considerable number of objects brought in by members of the public and answered a huge number of enquiries on local subjects.

Staffing

We were sad to see Ann Blake retire as full-time attendant, but pleased to see her back again working on Saturdays. Hannah Goodall has been appointed as the new full-time attendant. The grant from CyMAL for Annette Lewis's full-time post as Collections Manager came to an end, but Powys County Council continued to fund her post for three days a week. Kate Hebditch was appointed as Senior Curator and took up the post in August. We are grateful to Kevin Harding and Nina Hely-Hutchinson who worked until August as Acting Manager and Acting Curator respectively. Nina is continuing for one day a week on a temporary contract as Exhibitions Officer. Thanks are due to all members of staff for their hard work and commitment.

*Accessions 2006**Photographs and photography*

- A collection of postcards and photographs of Brecon c.1910–1940, and a miniature china shoe with the Brecon coat of arms, given by Miss C. J. Thorogood
- A collection of photographs from the Mayall family, Jewellers and Clock Repairs, Brecon, given by Mr N. Matthews
- Two cameras (Ensign and Comet), c. 1955, given by Mr F. C. Jones
- A folder of photographs from F. L. Stanton, Chemist, Brecon, a spectacle case from C. Jenkins, Optician, Brecon, a brass snuff box, a pill box, a corkscrew and a leather marker, given by Mr C. Havard
- A collection of photographs including Llanfaes School 1928, the Llanfrynach Home Guard c.1942, D. T. Davies with the Llangorse logboat May 1930, and Pennant Farm, Fennifach, Brecon c.1930, given by Mrs T. Davies
- A collection of photographs from Trecastle and Sennybridge, c.1930s, given by Mr G. Jones

Social history and archaeology

- A medieval annular silver brooch, found at Libanus by Mr S. Sutton. Purchased
- A collection of pottery from the Three Cocks area, excavated by Network Archaeology, Buckingham
- A glass window panel from the former St Mary's Rectory, Lion Street, Brecon, given by Mr M. Davies
- A chair back from the 1906 Brecon Eisteddfod, given by Mr B. Powell
- A bottle of beer brewed to celebrate the 250th anniversary of the Brecknockshire Agricultural Society, given by Mr M. Johns
- A pre-war pressure cooker, given by Mr D. Hopkins
- A school desk from Bethel Chapel School, Brecon, given by Mr D. Lloyd
- A First World War bronze plaque, issued to next of kin, given by Mrs J. Jones

Documents and books

- A minute book from Brecon and District Old People's Welfare Committee, given by Mrs G. Evans
- Jury panel lists from the Brecknock Assizes 1895–6, a collection of Breconshire turnpike notices 1844–1846, a property sale map and Courts Leet (1866) and Brecon County Roads Board notices (1854), given by Mr P. Richards
- 1870s shop receipts and advertisements, given by Mrs J. Winter
- A 1930s Brecon recipe book, given by Ms S. Spink
- The 'Brecon County Times' for 23 May 1868 and the 'Sporting Life' for 24 May 1862, given by H. Nicholas

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Brycheiniog

Minute book and paperwork relating to Llanfrynach School, given by Llanfrynach Parish and Community Council

A set of reproductions of the maps of the Brecon estate of the Rt. Hon. Henry, Lord Castle Darrow at Abercynrig/Dinas, the originals of which are in the ownership of Richard Lloyd, grandson of Sir John Lloyd of Abercynrig. On loan from the Brecknock Society

Textiles

A matching wool hat, jacket and waistcoat, made in Breconshire in the 1960s, given by Mrs M. Bellamy

A 1960s women's Welsh woollen suit of skirt, cape and waistcoat, given by Ms K. Gudsell

A child's hand-smocked dress, given by Mrs N. Hely-Hutchinson

Art

Two paintings by Jeff Nuttall: 'Country Schoolchild 1' and 'Country Schoolchild 4', given by the Brecknock Arts Trust

KATE HEBDITCH

THE ROYAL REGIMENT OF WALES MUSEUM, BRECON (The South Wales Borderers Museum Trust)

The role of a museum is continually evolving. The expectations of our visitors (actual and virtual) change, media interest multiplies, legal requirements alter, funding bodies seek increasingly detailed analyses of all aspects of our work, and external factors exert influences – all to such an extent that the display cases in the museum are the tip of the iceberg that is the museum's work. Most of these developments are very positive, indicative of an ever-growing interest in our heritage and enabling us to assist more people to derive more benefit from the museum's collections. Some developments are politically-driven, some may in the future be regarded as passing fads. Others are specific to regimental museums. All affect the day-to-day running of the regimental museum.

A development specific to this museum was the formation on 1st March 2006 of The Royal Welsh. This saw the amalgamation of The Royal Regiment of Wales (itself formed in 1969 when The South Wales Borderers and The Welch Regiment amalgamated) with The Royal Welch Fusiliers. As Colonel RJM Porter, first Colonel of The Royal Welsh, has written, 'The merging of great Regiments does not mean . . . that history is lost when a cherished regimental cap badge disappears; rather, it is revered and embellished'. Our curator Martin Everett has co-authored *A Short History of The Royal Welsh* to record the distinguished tradition of the predecessor regiments. The new regiment has three museums: Brecon (SWB/RRW), Cardiff (Welch/RRW) and Caernarfon (RWF). The relationship between the three museums and the collecting policy for the new regiment are not yet finalised, but the regimental museum in Brecon continues to be the spiritual home, safe repository and showcase of the heritage of the 'Old 24th' and The South Wales Borderers.

As always the museum is grateful to donors. It can be a big decision to offer personal items, or those belonging to a family member or comrade, to the regimental museum. Donors do so in the knowledge that their donations are invaluable contributions to the overall story of our soldiers and they are contributing to a permanent record of and tribute to veterans of the regiment. Recent acquisitions have included a carved sewing box by Pte John Leonard (2/24th Zulu War), the order of service for the 150th Anniversary Service of the Institution of the Victoria Cross at Westminster Abbey, the medals of WO2 Victor Church (1/SWB), and the medals of Islwyn Edmunds (2/SWB) – who landed on D-Day and was largely responsible for the erection in 1994 of the memorial to 2/SWB at Asnelles in Normandy. The extensive correspondence of Pte David James Jones of Devynock [sic] from his service with 4/SWB in Mesopotamia in World War One (found in the possessions of his late sister) is particularly poignant, both for its content and for other reasons: he died on 2nd

May 1917 and is remembered on the memorial at Basra, an area in which our current soldiers have recently served.

This year's notable visitors have included an official partnership group from Blaubeuren (twinned with Brecknockshire), Alan Caines (Assembly Member with responsibility for Reserve Forces), romantic novelist Iris Gower (researching her next novel), and members of the Smooth Fox Terrier Association interested in de Neuville's portrayal of the dog at the defence of Rorke's Drift. Author and journalist Byron Rogers' fascinating description of his visit to the regimental museum is now available in paperback as a chapter of *The Bank Manager and the Holy Grail*. As well as 'the maddest exhibit I have ever seen', he also found in the regimental museum 'probably the most moving of all museum exhibits on earth' – the teddy bear recovered from the trenches of Gallipoli. Among the military visitors have been the curator and Regimental Secretary of the Staffordshire Regiment, Ukrainian Army officers, Czech Republic Parachute soldiers, and the Chaplain General accompanied by twelve padres. The most exotically uniformed visitors were members of the International Police Officers' Association. We hosted a reunion of Major Bob Smith with ex-colleague Major JGM Williams and Mrs Williams. On reaching his 80th birthday this year Bob Smith retired after six years as editor of *The Three Feathers* (the newsletter of the Friends of the Regimental Museums) and a lifetime dedicated to the regiment and its museum. Day-to-day operation of the museum has changed hugely since his curatorship, but his commitment and ethos of service has never wavered. Another whose relationship with the regiment and the museum has lasted a lifetime is Frank Wheeler: we were glad to see him in the museum on his 95th birthday.

The regimental museum continues to be involved with many local initiatives and supports local causes. A museum display was produced for Veterans' Day in the Guildhall, and we liaised with veterans who manned the display and talked to visitors throughout the day. A display was also provided for the annual Rorke's Drift concert at Theatr Brycheiniog. We assisted the Brecknock Society by loaning a slide screen for the Sir John Lloyd lecture. The museum continues to provide a venue for meetings of the re-enactors of the 1879 Group. Lucy Jones helped organise and Celia Green completed the SAMA sponsored walk up Pen y Fan to raise funds for a Welsh memorial to the Falklands conflict. Groups throughout south and mid-Wales have enjoyed illustrated presentations from museum supporters Bill Cainan, Rodney Ashwood and David Mathias. Support of the local community continues to include offering work placements to pre-GCSE pupils. This year these included Sam Jobbins, a descendant of Rorke's Drift defender Private John Jobbins.

The regimental museum's education provision continues to help an increasing number of visitors from mid and south Wales, including primary schools, secondary schools, special needs groups, further and higher education students,

cadet groups, scouts, and members of the Army Preparation Course. Research students have carried out a variety of projects, including a visitor survey for a degree in cultural tourism. Key Stage 2 workshops catering for National Curriculum requirements are particularly popular, and special needs groups of all ages find our hands-on sessions stimulating. Feedback is continuously assessed, current good practice incorporated, and provision refined. This has included trialling Generic Learning Outcomes as part of the MLA's (Museums, Libraries, Archives) *Inspiring Learning For All* initiative.

Involvement with the wider museum community informs work at the regimental museum in many ways. We hosted a committee meeting of the Welsh Federation of Museums and Galleries. Curator Martin Everett attended the annual AMOT (Army Museums Ogilby Trust) conference and visited the National War Museum of Scotland. He also spoke to an invited audience at the launch of The Institute of Conservation in Wales in Cardiff about digitisation of the regimental museum's photographic collection as a case study for conservation training. Providing information for museum bodies is an increasing demand on the curator's time; it is to be hoped that surveys such as CyMAL's [sic] lengthy *Cultural Diversity* questionnaire benefit the museums that complete them. Education Adviser Alison Hembrow maintains a programme of Continuing Professional Development under the Museums Association's AMA Plus scheme, which has included assessing education provision at several museums including the Imperial War Museum North in Manchester. She also contributed to an article on regimental museums in *Museums Journal*. Staff have provided on-going advice and information to the committee and consultants planning the proposed new military museum in Cardiff Castle. Training for museum assistants Lucy Jones and Sylvia Davies has included attending a course on digital images, plus training in customer care skills organised by Brecon Action Group. The regimental museum no longer needs an external Curatorial Advisor, so David Moore's contribution in that role has ended; the museum is grateful for his contribution over several years, and welcomes his successor Kate Hebditch to her curatorship of the Brecknock Museum.

Opportunities in the media help publicise the regimental museum and make audiences aware of our work and resources by sharing information. The curator was interviewed by BBC Radio Wales about the unveiling of the 2/SWB memorial at Caubec-en-Caen. Jamie Owen's live BBC Radio Wales broadcast from Brecon included an interview with Alison Hembrow about the close relationship between the regimental museum and the town. Empire Media Productions were helped with their research for a three-part Channel 5 TV programme on the Victoria Cross (to be shown in late 2006). Part of an HTV programme about researching family history was filmed at the regimental museum. The Welsh launch of the Royal Mail's Victoria Cross 150th

anniversary postage stamps was held here, with the curator featuring in the subsequent publicity. One of our exhibits has also been in the news: regimental mascot Taffy III has been in the museum since 1993 and has been popular with visitors ever since. The Imperial War Museum has borrowed him for their special exhibition on animals in conflict throughout the twentieth century, *The Animals' War*. This exhibition is at IWM London until 22 April 2007, and then moves to the IWM North in Manchester in summer 2007. Taffy III is representing a previous Taffy, who went to the Western Front with the soldiers in World War One, was awarded the 1914 Star, and died in France in 1915. Taffy III was inspected by a conservation officer from the IWM before specialist removers took him to London, where thousands of people have seen *The Animals War* and learnt of Taffy's connection with Brecon.

Taffy's loan is an example of raising public awareness of the regimental museum. Our education service for local school pupils is another, adding more local visitors to those from further afield. This museum's visitor numbers compare very favourably with other similar museums, attracting more interest than most other 'stand alone' museums (as opposed to those situated in heritage attractions such as castles). Additionally, technological developments mean virtual visitors can gain various information or services they need from the museum's website rather than physically visiting the museum, particularly for basic research. Measuring these visitors and the services provided to them is an interesting issue, with funding bodies needing evidence of the efficacy of museum services. Clearly the museum's internet shop, overseen by Celia Green, is a successful aspect of the website, with e-commerce generating a significant proportion of overall shop income and thus contributing to the museum's running costs. This year's planned enhancement of the website has been postponed, with a new version – under the banner *Museums of The Royal Welsh* – planned for 2007.

Work to assist researchers is on-going and includes indexing SWB Inter-War enlistment ledgers recently received from the MoD, and indexing 1914/15 Star medal rolls using digital images taken by the curator at the National Archives. This year the library has been re-carpeted, fitted with improved shelving, and redesigned to improve access and facilities for researchers. Other maintenance work has seen the replacement of the entry turnstile, an old favourite with many visitors but increasingly impractical, with a more accessible entry system.

Projects for next year include rearranging the reserve collection to provide storage space for the Regimental Colours while the Regimental Chapel in Brecon cathedral is replastered. Forthcoming publications the curator has assisted with are *A Clash of Empires: Tsingtao* by Dr John Dixon, and the ambitious *A Soldier-Artist in the Anglo-Zulu War: WW Lloyd 1/24th* by David Rattray – in which Lloyd's paintings are matched with current photographs of the locations he recorded. Information on both books will be available from the museum.

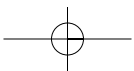
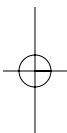
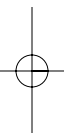
The Royal Regiment of Wales Museum, Brecon

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We are grateful to everyone, in the public eye and behind the scenes, who helps ensure the regimental museum remains a valued and well-used resource of local, national and international importance: visitors, customers, donors, grant-giving bodies, members of the museum Friends, the regiment, trustees, Saturday attendants Arfon and Lesley Williams, and loyal volunteers including Fred Antell, Alan Baynham-Jones, Yvonne Callaghan and Tom Phillips. Together they enable the regimental museum to adapt to modern demands, building on many years of history and continuing to evolve.

The Royal Regiment of Wales Museum,
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ALISON HEMBROW



POWYS COUNTY ARCHIVES

In 2006 Powys County Council underwent an internal reorganisation. Powys Library, Information and Archives Service now forms part of a new Recreation, Culture and Countryside grouping, reporting to Paul Griffiths as Head of Service. On the plus side, this brings the Library and Archive services back into a cultural grouping with the Museum service, which will no doubt enhance and encourage cross domain working. Prior to reorganisation the Archives service operated in parallel with the Council's Modern Records facility in which the Council's own records were stored. The County Archives and Modern Records was overseen by the former County Archivist. As part of the 2006 reorganisation, Modern Records, renamed Information Management, was split from the Archives service and now forms part of the County Council's Information and Communications Technology (ICT) service.

Gordon Reid, formerly County Archivist, departed from Powys Archives at the end of 2005 to take up a post with the South West Museums, Libraries and Archives Council, the regional development agency for museums, libraries and archives, covering the South West of England. Anna Page has completed the distance learning diploma course in Archives at the University of Wales Aberystwyth. Anna has now become the Assistant Archivist for Powys Archives. All archive services in Wales undertook the PSQG (Public Services Quality Group) visitor survey in February and March 2006, following a successful series of grant applications made by Powys Archives to CyMAL on behalf of all Welsh archive services. The survey, carried out across England, Scotland and Wales and Northern Ireland, is now an established part of the evidence gathering landscape and provides invaluable support for archives at the local, regional and national level. Results indicate that the majority of people think that Archive Services make a valid contribution to society by preserving our culture and heritage, strengthening family and community identity, and providing opportunities for learning. The report itself runs to around 170 pages but a summary of the most interesting statistics follows. Percentages from services in Wales, and from across Britain (England, Wales, Scotland, Northern Ireland and the Channel Islands) are recorded here for comparison purposes. In Powys 100% of visitors thought the quality and appropriateness of staff's advice was good or very good (97.6% Wales; 95.5% national average); 40.5% rated the overall service as very good (65.9% Wales; 43.7% national average); 39% thought addressing our opening hours was one of the most important areas to improve (21.5% Wales; 15.5% national average); 39% wanted an improvement to the visitor facilities (14.2% Wales; 11.8% national average); 95.6% travelled to Powys Archives by car, motorbike or taxi (75.2% Wales; 36% national average); 47.8% record this as their first visit to Powys Archives (27.7% Wales; 18.1%

national average); 63.6% of our users are male (46% Wales, 48% national average); 36.4% of our users are female (54% Wales; 52% national average).

The Friends of Powys Archives has a membership of over 220 individuals, families or societies. Our quarterly newsletter, *Almanac*, continues to go to all Friends, Council Members, libraries and secondary schools. Talks and workshops organised throughout the past year have included: a talk on the Radnorshire Quarter Sessions records held at Powys Archives (Anna Page, Rhayader); computer workshops on using the internet to research family history (Catherine Richard, Montgomery, Newtown, Llandrindod and Brecon); a session on using sources to begin your family history research (Dawn Gill, searchroom assistant, Hay); a talk on the records of the Caersws workhouse housed at Powys Archives (Anna Page, Newtown).

This year a small number of Friends have also transcribed and indexed several school log books from digital images. Additional to last year, Angela Jones from Guernsey has completed the transcription of Gladestry school log books dating from 1877-1924, and has completed the transcription of a Newchurch school log book, 1936-1954. Dorothy Baynham from Llandrindod has transcribed the Llanbister Cantal log books, 1930-1964. Sadie Cole, Secretary of the Radnorshire Society took on and completed the enormous task of transcribing a Radnorshire Quarter Sessions Order Book, 1801-1813. Beth Williams, volunteer at the Archives has listed and indexed Llandrindod Wells building control plans dating from the end of the nineteenth century. This huge task has taken many hours of work, and will greatly aid researchers' use of this collection.

Powys Archives continues to hold regular local studies meetings with staff from Powys Library Service to discuss ongoing projects, and to consider ways in which to promote both services by working collaboratively. 2006 has been a particularly active year for local studies following the appointment of Judy McCallum to catalogue the material held in Newtown and Llandrindod libraries, and also the local studies collection at Powys Archives. Chris Price continues to tackle the local studies material at Brecon library. Both Judy and Chris are currently adding local studies stock to the library cataloguing system Dynix. This is an ongoing project overseen by Catherine Richards, Archives Manager and Doreen Hall, Bibliographic Services Librarian.

Another Teacher Placement Day was held by Powys Archives in February 2006. Again this was organised in partnership with *Careers Wales*. In April 2006 we had our first visit by a school, requested by a teacher who attended one of our placement days. Fourteen 11 year old pupils from Gladestry school came to the Archives to research family and house history for school projects.

Powys Archives has supplied Crai Archives Centre with a range of sources from its collections including digitised copies of school log books, admission registers and electoral registers, and photocopies of OS maps and census

population figures. Crai Archives Centre has set up home at Crai Village Hall. Mrs Frances Walter and Mrs Liz Matthews are in the process of gathering historical information about the local community for use by researchers and schools.

In addition to the talks and workshops listed previously for the Friends of Powys Archives, staff continue to be invited to give talks to other groups and organisations. This year talks have included: The records of Breconshire Quarter Sessions, by Anna Page for Llangynidr Local History Society; The records of Montgomeryshire Workhouses, by Catherine Richards for Montgomeryshire Genealogical Society; The work of Powys Archives, by Anna Page, for Llandrindod Wells Pensioners Group. Powys Archives has also been involved in a number of outreach activities in order to promote the service: All staff attended the family history fair organised by Powys Family History Society in Welshpool. Powys Archives staff had a display of documents and were on hand throughout the day to answer queries; Staff also provided Montgomeryshire Genealogical Society with a small display of images of records from Llansanfraid and Trefeglwys for their open days; Powys Archives had a small exhibition of images in the Hotel Commodore during the Llandrindod Wells Victorian Festival between the 20–28 August. The exhibition featured architects' plans of selected buildings in Llandrindod from the late Victorian period; Powys Archives was also involved with an evening organised by Radnorshire Museum and Culturenet Cymru to promote the Llandrindod Portraits Project (a project aiming to identify photographs of Llandrindod residents from the 1930s–1950s); and finally the display case outside the Council Chamber in County Hall has housed seven small exhibitions over the past year, including records from Montgomeryshire Militia, Rhayader workhouse and a collection of postcards from Llanwrtyd Wells.

Finally, Powys Archives decided not to hold an Open Day in 2006, which would have taken place in September. Instead it was decided to organise another promotional event for the Autumn and this took the form of a 2007 calendar. The images used are photographs taken by P. B. Abery and C. Selwyn and reproduced with kind permission of Mrs Evelyn Carr and Mr John Selwyn. These photographs, now in the care of the Archives Service depict wonderful scenes of salmon fishing in and around the River Wye in the 1930s, with the front cover of the calendar featuring a delightful image of an unidentified girl feeding a baby badger. Additional images which feature include Master Phillip Pawson of Sudan, on holiday at Aberedw, with his first Wye Salmon; a gang of men netting the River Irfon at Llangammarch Wells for coarse fish in 1932; and a photograph of 'Instruments of Death' – spears and gaffs that were used as evidence in salmon poaching cases at Llandrindod Wells in 1931, when twenty defendants appeared, and fines varying from ten shillings to three pounds were

inflicted. P. B. Aberly came to Builth Wells in 1898 from Folkestone in Kent, and became a noted and popular local photographer. He owned a photography studio in the town and was the official photographer for the Birmingham Water Works at the Elan Valley. C. Selwyn was related to the Selwyns who owned two shops in Llandrindod Wells. The first being a stationer's shop and the second, their main outlet, where you could buy fishing tackle and a licence to fish in the Ithon.

Powys Archives 2005–2006 Annual Report was published in April. This summarises the work undertaken by staff and a full list of accessions received. Details of accessions received during 2006 with particular reference to Breconshire are as follows:

Public and Official Records

- Records of Hay UDC, Hay RDC, Builth UDC, Llanwrtyd UDC, Colwyn RDC, Painscastle RDC: files, ledgers, rate books, plans c.1900–1974. [Acc 1666]
Breconshire County Council minutes, printed and bound 1931–1963, with gaps. [Acc 1673]
Game Duty certificate, Crickhowell 1817 [Acc 1652]
Records of Llansbyddydd/Libanus CP School, including log books and school photographs 1903–2005 [Acc 1646]
Log books from Priory Church in Wales (aided) School, Brecon 1896–1965 [Acc 1654]
Marriage register for St Mary's Church, Capel Nant-Ddu, Breconshire 1974–1977 [Acc 1655]
Parochial records for: Llanafan Fawr 1835–1980; Llanafan Fechan 1736–1798; Llanfihangel Bryn Pabuan 1722–1812; Llanyre 1868–1987 [Acc 1672]
Records from Brechfa United Reform Chapel, Llandefalle 1837–1902 [Acc 1644]
Order of service for the ordination of Mr D Hubert Davies at Aion Baptist Chapel, Ystradgynlais, 19 & 20th September 1932 [Acc 1670]
Printed census reports for Breconshire, Montgomeryshire and Radnorshire 1966–1971 [Acc 1643]
3 plans of proposed Usk valley reservoir, Breconshire; c.1968. Management plans, reviews and drafts, 1976, 1993–2005 [Acc 1675]
Minutes of Llangynidr Community Council, 1979–1991; Minutes of Planning and Playing Fields Committees, 1979–1991; Correspondence re footpaths, 1977–1992 [Acc 1677]
Parochial records from Llanyre, Llanfihangel Helygen, Newbridge-on-Wye and Cwmbach Lechryd (Radnorshire); Llanafan Fawr and Llanfihangel Bryn Pabuan. Records relating to Pencerrig NP School and Llanafan Fawr VP School. 1725–2006 [Acc 1678]

- Copy of a photograph of the Brecon Poor Law Board of Guardians, 1930 [Acc 1681]
- Priory Church in Wales (Aided) Primary School: Log Books, 1966–1990; Admissions Register, 1909–1969; Account Book, 1907–1974 [Acc 1689]
- Files on reservoirs, including Craig Goch, Radnorshire and Lyn Brianne, Breconshire 1973–1986 [Acc 1693]
- Builth Wells Town Council minutes Feb – Oct 1974, Sep 1976 – Mar 2005 [Acc 1696]
- Minute book of Traiarnmawr Parish Council 1894–1948. Minute book of Traianglas Parish Council 1894–1967 [Acc 1700]
- Copies of 'The Silurian'; Brecon Boys Grammar School Magazine, 1951–1961. Photograph of Brecon Boys Grammar School soccer team, 1960 [Acc 1702]
- 2 volumes of Builth Wells High School newsletters 1989–2003 [Acc 1709]
- Minute book of Brecon Free Church Council 1926–1984 [Acc 1710]
- Taff Fechan Water Supply Board records 1927–1958 [Acc 1713]

Non-Official Records

- Plan of the Mill and Lands situate in the village of Llangunider (Llangynidr) 1827 [Acc 1651]
- Marriage settlement, Merthyr Cynog 1841 [Acc 1663]
- Deeds to 1 & 2 Pleasant View Cottages, Erwood, Breconshire 1858–2004; Presteign Market Hall and Public Room Company share list 1862–1866; funeral cards stuck into volume 1871–1938; National Diary of Wales, used as a record of sales, purchases, rents and borrowings 1893 [Acc 1667]
- Photographs of salmon fishing at Aberedw, Radnorshire and Builth Wells, by P. B. Abery of Builth Wells and C. Selwyn of Llandrindod Wells early 1930s [Acc 1660]
- Photograph of Crickhowell, shooting team 1885 [Acc 1665]
- Photographs of Carlton Hotel & Mid Wales Riding School, Llanwrtyd Wells [c 1980]; Postcards of Erwood & Llanddewi'r Cwm, and Llandrindod Wells [early C20th] [Acc 1663]
- Records of Hay Study Group, Breconshire: minutes, constitution, membership lists, accounts, programmes; 1969–2003 [Acc 1674]
- Bound copy of: 'A Social and Economic Survey of two Parishes (Maescar & Senny) in South West Breconshire', a dissertation by Owen Thomas Williams Price; 1946 [Acc 1676]
- Photographs of Hay: Fire Service C20th; Railway Station c 1950; Bridge reconstruction 1956/7; floods and snow 1962/3; miscellaneous photographs, n/d. Apprentice indenture, 1919. Hay Choir records 1923–1962. [Acc 1697]
- Photographs of Ystradgynlais and area: chapels, miners, pit heads, ?mid C20th.

- Photocopy of an extract for Ynisedwyn iron works and colliery of 'Reports to the Commissioners on the Employment of Children' C19th [Acc 1705]
- Memorabilia of the Batts family of Hay-on-Wye and Howey; title deeds, photographs, letters, concert programmes from Hay, Brecon and Llandrindod Wells; school records of JS Batts from Christ College, Brecon 1836–c1985 [Acc 1708]
- Books and pamphlets, (mainly in Welsh), and notebooks (mainly in English), formerly belonging to Sarah Jane Tirzah Harries, of 20 Pelican Street, Ystradgynlais, (Breconshire), and her father, Benjamin Thomas of Cwmfforchwen Farm, Palleg, Ystradgynlais 1846–1991 [Acc 1714]

CATHERINE RICHARDS
Archives Manager

FFERIG – THE LOST KINGDOM

In his listing of Kings of Brycheiniog, Theophilus Jones,¹ records a sequence somewhere between 550AD and 790AD, when the local rulers from Cawrdaf through to Tegyd are described not simply as Kings of Brycheiniog, but as ‘Kings of Ferreg and Brycheiniog’.

Cawrdaf,	King of Ferreg & Brycheiniog
Caw,	King of Ferreg & Brycheiniog
Gloyw,	King of Ferreg & Brycheiniog
Hoyw,	King of Ferreg & Brycheiniog c.640
Cynfarch,	King of Ferreg & Brycheiniog c.680
Cyndeg,	King of Ferreg & Brycheiniog c.703
Teithwalch,	King of Ferreg & Brycheiniog
Tegyd,	King of Ferreg & Brycheiniog
Tangwydd,	King of Brycheiniog c.796 AD
Anharawd,	King of Brycheiniog c. 829
Gwenddydd,	King of Brycheiniog
Hydd Hwgan	Prince or Lord of Brycheiniog d.917
Dryffin,	Prince of Brycheiniog d.c.944

Theophilus uses a wide range of versions of the name: Ffereg,² Fferlex,³ Ferlex,⁴ Ferlix,⁵ Fferregs,⁶ and Ferreg.⁷ Ferreg, the most frequent, is a curious spelling; the initial *F* must represent the Welsh *Ff*, which appears in two of the spellings. Welsh *Ff*, English *F* is unvoiced; the Welsh voiced *F*, sounded as English *V*, rarely occurs as an initial letter except after the definite article, after feminine nouns or in borrowings from English, none of which would apply here. In both the modern examples of *-fferig* place-names, the pronunciation is Welsh *ff*, unvoiced *f* (cf. ‘off’ and ‘of’ in English). The ending *-eg* is the normal Welsh suffix for the name of a language, (*Cymraeg*, *Ffrangeeg*, *Saesneg*) and contrasts with the suffix *-ig*, which is a regular adjectival ending (cf. *Cymraeg* – *Welsh language* – and *Cymreig* – *Welsh* [adjectival]). The ending *-ig* occurs in the only two extant instances of place-names containing Fferig, and, consequently, the name will appear throughout this article as *Fferig*.

The precedence given to Fferig over Brycheiniog in a list of Kings of Brycheiniog may be of no consequence, but it may equally well imply that the former kingdom, Fferig, was originally larger or richer than a junior partner, Brycheiniog, in the Usk and Llynfi basins amongst the hills and mountains. Theophilus describes Fferig in the early ages of Caradog and Arthur from the Roman conquest to the Anglo-Saxon invasions as ‘that tract of land between the Severn and the Wye’,⁸ but when the Kingdom appears as a shadowy historical

entity, it is already much reduced, and seems to be confined to the Wye valley from the Welsh border to the environs of Hereford. The putative position of Fferig, downstream on the reaches of the Wye beyond the present Welsh border, would reinforce the idea that this was the richer and more productive of these twin kingdoms.⁹ This prominence of the eastern, more fertile, lowland sector as opposed to the poorer areas in the Welsh hills, is paralleled exactly by the Kingdom of Powys (not the modern artificial county). Powys (from the Latin *Pagus* – *the rural area*) was the hilly part of Denbighshire and Montgomeryshire that remained Welsh after the catastrophic loss to the Saxons of the eastern, lowland portion of the post-Roman Celtic kingdom, the tribal territory of the Cornavii in modern Shropshire. This loss, the Fall of Pengwern c 642, is lamented in the haunting poem *Stafell Cynddylan*,¹⁰ written down in the ninth Century, where Heledd looks down from the Wrekin onto the empty, burnt out hall of her brother Cynddylan in y Dref Wen, *Wellington*, the capital of his kingdom.

The name Fferig now only occurs in two place-names, both in Breconshire, in the form Rhosfferig, *Fferig Heath or Upland Meadow*.¹¹ The unvoiced *Ff* reflects the colloquial pronunciation in both cases, and, despite the entry *Rhosferig* in the University of Wales Gazetteer of Welsh Place-Names,¹² the single, voiced, *-f-* (or *-v-*) is erroneous. Fferig is not included by Melville Richards in his authoritative listing of all Welsh administrative and territorial units.¹³ He does include one similar name, Fferyllwg, for Rhwng Gwy a Hafren – modern Radnorshire, but he dismisses this out of hand as a bogus title for the area. The name Fferyllwg derives from Fferyll, the Welsh name for Vergil, normally only used in combinations such as fferyllydd, '*pharmacist*', (since Vergil was considered an alchemist and doctor), on the pattern of Seisyllwg (Glamorgan) from the personal name Seisyllt. However, Fferyll does not occur elsewhere as a personal name, and there are no other records of Fferyllwg.

The only instance of Rhosfferig in the Gazetteer is an entry for a parish north-west of Builth, originally part of the very much larger Llanfihangel Brynpabuan, but separated off from it to create a new 'parish of ease' around a seat of the gentry, Plas Rhosfferig [SO016521]. This was one of the homes of the Lloyd family of Aberannell, Rhosfferig and Dinas (Brecon). The practice, common enough in the eighteenth century, is evidenced further in Brecknock at Penpont and Pipton. Peter Powell notes the form Cefnrhosfferig [Keuenrosuerek] – *Ridge of Fferig Moor* – in this area in 1278.¹⁴

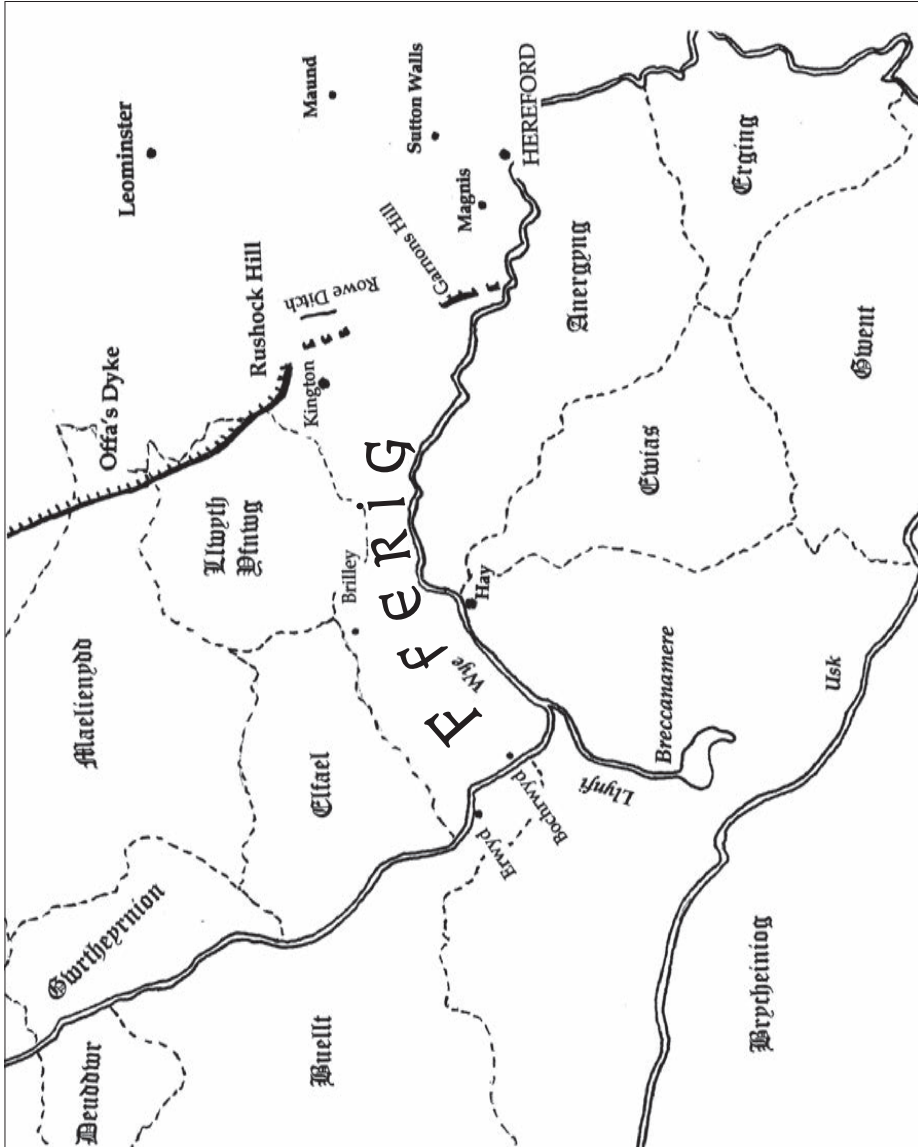
The second instance, also Rhosfferig, is in Brecon, north of the town centre and to the west of Cerrig Cochion, outside the line of the walls. This area has officially been renamed Bellevue, but colloquially retains its native name in both Welsh and English, unlike other 'gentrified' names in Brecon.¹⁵ Although Fferig in these two names may be a reference to the Kingdom of Fferig, the name may equally well be a mere description of the sites.

The meaning of Fferig is problematic, but the word derives as an adjective from a root *ffer-*, for which three possibilities exist:¹⁶ one, *fferins*, (sweets, fairings) is a late borrowing from English (first recorded in 1722), and can be discounted. Ffêr, *ankle*, is linguistically possible, but rather unlikely. A third derivation, the earliest recorded of these possibilities, would be from the adjective ffêr,¹⁷ *valiant, brave*, which also occurs as a noun meaning *brave man, hero*, and this would make it a good candidate for a tribal name boasting the valour of the warriors. The basis of ffêr is the verb fferu, one set of meanings of which is ‘*to congeal, thicken, harden*’, which, as an adjectival place-name, would imply land drying out. This would suit the position of Fferig, stretching from the hills behind Clyro and Hay out in the direction of Hereford on the flood plain of the Wye, where the river bursts forth from the confines of the hills, frequently inundating the fertile land. It would equally well describe the Rhosfferig area of Brecon, well drained land on a south-facing slope above the town.

During the reign of Teithwalch, in the first half of the eighth Century, major conflict with the Saxons spelt the beginning of the collapse of Fferig, and the dimly remembered battle of Hereford in 760 seems to have marked the end of the separate Kingdom of Fferig, when Teithwalch’s son, Tegyd, the last independent King of both Brycheiniog and Fferig, lost most of the kingdom to the Saxons, the remnant being attached to Brycheiniog.¹⁸

It is during this epoch that the tribal focus of the Anglo-Saxon people called the Hecani or Magonsætán,¹⁹ the Mercian or Hwicce sub-tribe occupying the fringes of the Welsh Marches, appears to have migrated southwards from Leominster.²⁰ The Priory there was originally founded as Llanllieni by Dewi Sant at the eastern edge of an area of Dewi dedications in central Radnorshire (Glascwm still boasted ownership of Bangu,²¹ Dewi’s handbell, at the time of Gerallt Gymro/*Giraldus Cambrensis*). Following the fall of this district, possibly called Leon,²² to the Saxons, the Priory had been rebuilt by the Magonsætán tribal ruler Merewalh, third son of the pagan king Penda of Mercia,²³ for the missionary Edfrith of Northumbria who baptized him in 660 at the time of re-conversion of the area.²⁴ However, by the time of the murder of Æthelberht, King of the East Saxons, by the Mercian King Offa at Sutton Walls [SO 525463] in 793²⁵ or 794,²⁶ the focus had already moved as far south as Sutton, originally the southern outpost of the Magonsætán. Æthelberht’s beheaded body was hurriedly buried in a ditch near Sutton, then clandestinely disinterred and transferred on a cart – from which the head fell – to ‘Fernelega’ alias Hereford,²⁷ at that time still outside, or on the fringes of, the tribal territory, and beyond the clutches of Offa. In 830, under the rule of Mildfrith, a stone church was built there, on the site of the first wooden church.

The tribal name of the Saxons of northern Herefordshire, Magonsætán, has often been taken as deriving from Magnis, the Roman name of the fort at Kenchester, north west of Hereford, but this is linguistically impossible.²⁸ The



Map 1 Associated sites: Welsh Lordships and position of Fferig

name would appear to be related to the present area of the Maund villages [SO 561505 & 568492], first recorded as Magonsetum in 811²⁹ in the *Cartularium Saxonicum* from an earlier Welsh root related to *magen*, the plain. This would indicate that, at the time of the movement southwards of the Magonsætan, Magnis still lay within the Welsh sphere, not in the territory of the Saxons, even though the tribal name has in the past lead erroneously to the opposite conclusion.

This movement or expansion of the Magonsætan southwards in the direction of Hereford, from an area of early conquest around Leominster, rather than westwards from the line of the Severn and the Malverns (Welsh Moelfryn, *the bare hill*) is interesting. It also confirms an established Welsh presence in the area of the Wye plain. This is indicated further in the name of one of the early Saxon Bishops of the area – Wallstod – ‘*Understands Welsh*’. Although the tribal diocese of the Magonsætan is traditionally said to date from the time of possible bishops Putta,³¹ 676AD, or Tyrthelm, 688, the first to refer to himself as Bishop of Hereford³² was Wulfheard c. 811. The later county of Herefordshire lost the northern parts of the diocese to Shropshire, and absorbed the Welsh lands of Erging and Anerging south of the Wye, to form the present almost circular county centring on Hereford itself.

Tegyð’s son Tangwydd succeeded as King of Brycheiniog to ‘that part of Fferegs which is now called Radnorshire’,³³ around 796 AD, and was succeeded c. 829 AD by his son, Anharawd, as King of Brycheiniog and Lower Buellt (presumably the Erwyd and Llys-wen areas), although Theophilus states³⁴ that Hugh Thomas called him Lord of Fferegs and Brecon.

Two generations earlier, the area had been the centre of much warlike activity on both sides, on the part of both Mercians and Danes and particularly later the Mercian King Offa on the one hand, and the ‘Ferlicians’,³⁵ as Theophilus terms the inhabitants of Fferig, on the other. After suffering defeats and incursions at the hands of these Ferlicians, Offa retaliated with an invasion with a ‘strongly confederated army’ of other Saxon princes, whose expedition failed in the face of a Welsh policy of withdrawal and abandonment, forcing a Saxon retreat when faced with no provisions.

This ‘scorched earth’ policy seems curious, but would fit in well with a system of transhumance farming – the seasonal transfer of herds and flocks to temporary pastures. This system is still common amongst sheep farmers, and is held to be the reason for the repetition of place-names from the Talgarth area around Defynnog.³⁶ This would have meant the Welsh herders being able to remove their stock fairly rapidly, leaving the land empty for Offa to follow up his abortive military campaign by subsequently settling ‘a strong colony’ of Saxons in the kingdom of Fferig³⁷ as a bulwark against further incursions by the Welsh before he commenced the construction of his Dyke in the 770s. Transhumance may also explain the *Rhos*- element in the two surviving Fferig names: heathland, or

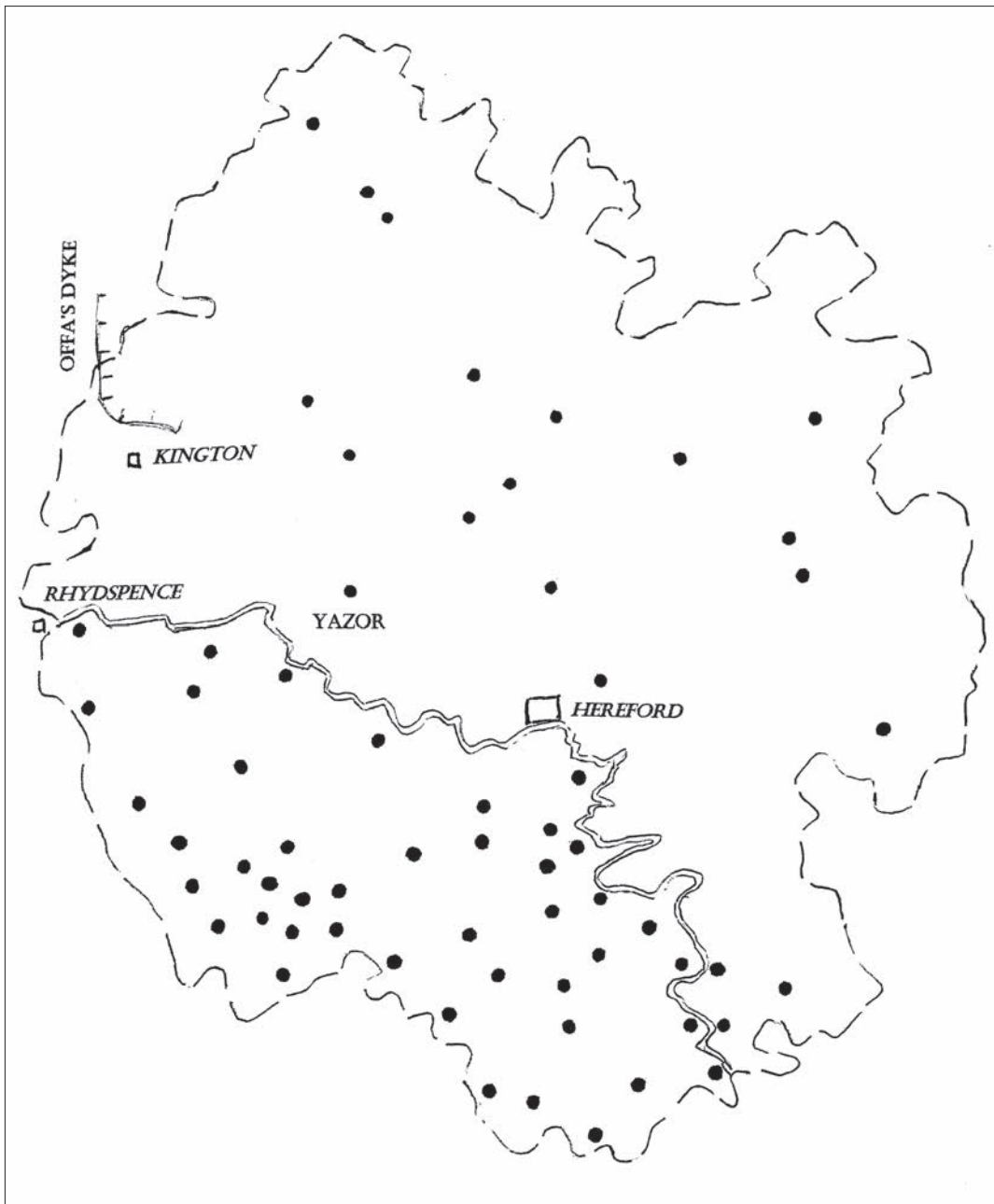
upland pasture would have provided grazing during the periods of the inundation of the Wye flood plains.

It is usually taken as read that Offa's Dyke ran unbroken from sea to sea, from Prestatyn to Chepstow, but this does not seem to have been the case. In their authoritative account of Offa's Dyke, David Hill and Margaret Worthington assert that the Dyke proper only starts at Rushock Hill [SO 301 596] just north of Kington, running to Treuddyn [SJ 267 577] in Flintshire, and shows remarkable consistency in its construction throughout this length.³⁸ Other earthworks, between Rushock Hill and the mouth of the Wye at Chepstow, historically assumed to be part of the same frontier ditch, are neither continuous, nor a southward projection of Offa's earthwork and do not display the style of construction consistently used between Treuddyn and Rushock. Indeed, the putative section of Offa's Dyke between Rushock Hill and the Wye is very spasmodic, occupying only about a quarter of the distance between the southern end of Offa's Dyke at Rushock and the river. Various reasons have been put forward for the gapped nature of the earthworks in this area. One suggestion is heavy forestation, but this is deemed unlikely for this area, since Domesday Herefordshire had the least woodland cover of any border county,³⁹ although Professor Wyn Linnard⁴⁰ states that, at the time of Domesday, there was still a good deal of woodland along the whole length of the border from Dee to Severn. The wildwood argument would thus also have applied to much of the length of the Dyke.⁴¹ Linnard's description of the dyke refers to straight sections across cleared and cultivated areas, and irregular or sinuous parts indicating the presence of forest.

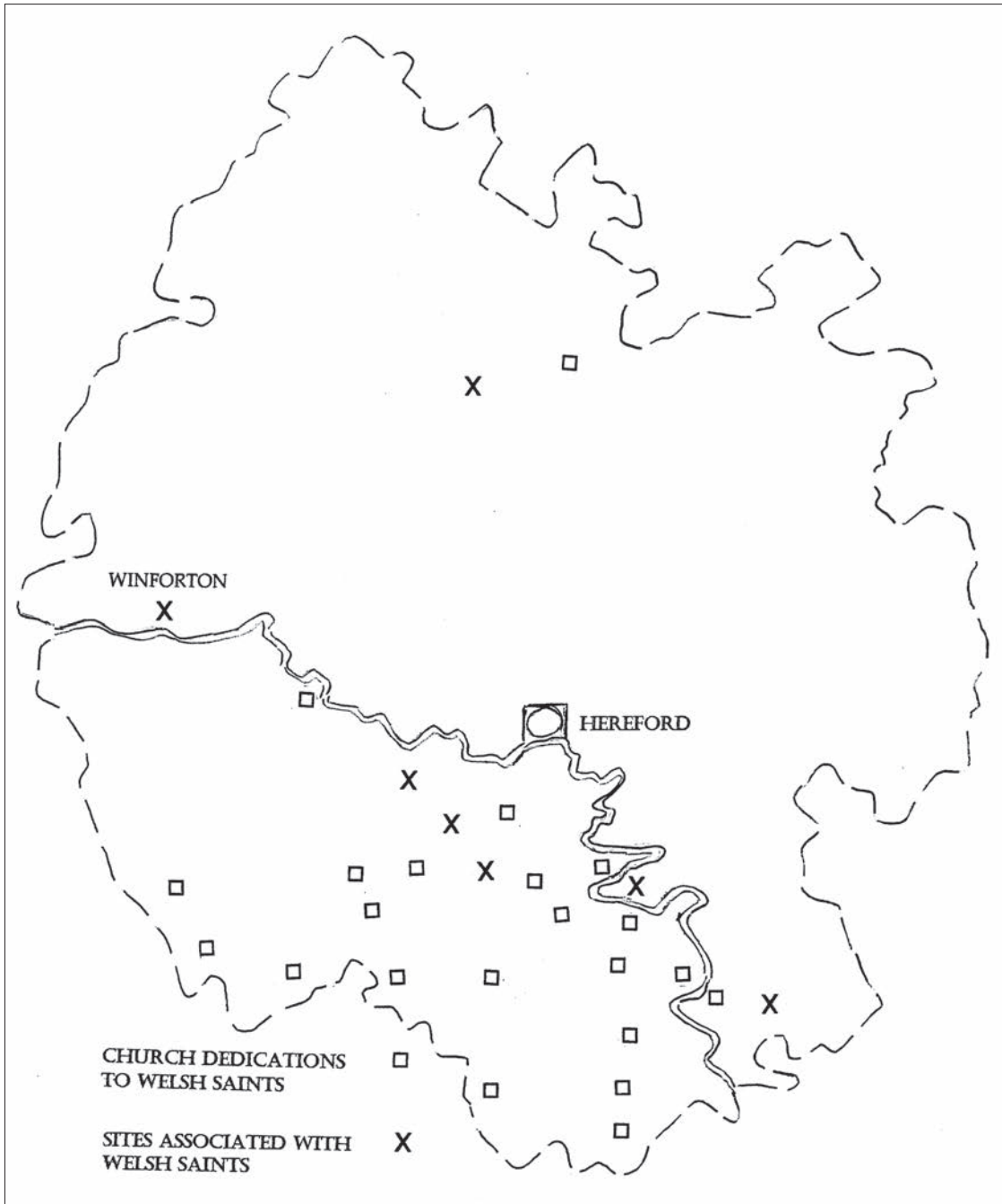
The puzzle of a break in the defences offered by the Dyke between Rushock and the Wye would be solved if the area had already been settled by Offa's Mercians or allies before he began his earthwork – a dyke further south and west would not have been necessary, as the Saxons already settled in Fferig plugged the gap. They would have defended the frontier against the Welsh for their Mercians overlords or allies, and the Saxons at this date seemed largely uninterested in the Welsh uplands.

The Gwentian Brut⁴² maintains that the Welsh devastated Mercia in 765, and razed the Dyke to the ground in 776. In response in 784, Offa rebuilt part of his Dyke nearer his home territory, which Lord Rennel claims is the Rowe Ditch (SO 383574 to SO379605) near Staunton-on-Arrow, which does line up with the Garnon's Hill earthworks near the Wye. This may represent a move back eastwards of the border between the Ferlicians and the Magonsæton, although unlikely if Offa had already garrisoned Fferig with Saxons before building his Dyke.

An examination of place-name evidence⁴³ shows that the area south of the Wye – Anergyng and Erging/*Archenfield* – remained staunchly Welsh-speaking until well after the Saxon conquest and the inclusion of these areas in Herefordshire, and is placed by Professor Kenneth Jackson within the same



Map 2 Welsh place-names



Map 3 Dedications to Welsh Saints in Herefordshire

Brythonic-speaking linguistic zone as Wales, Cornwall and Cumbria.⁴⁴ It still had sufficient monoglot Welsh speakers in the time of Elizabeth I to warrant the placing of Bibles in Welsh and English alongside each other in the churches, for the Welsh to learn English. The remainder of present-day Herefordshire shows a fairly even, if low, distribution of placenames of Welsh origin. The exception is the area between Rushock Hill, Hereford city and Rhydspence on the north bank of the Wye on the present England–Wales border. This small triangle of Herefordshire between the Arrow and the Wye has only one name – Yazor – to which is attributed a Welsh origin, despite its very Herefordshire look.⁴⁵ The corresponding area north of Brilley across the Welsh border in Radnorshire is the only area on the Welsh side of Offa’s Dyke evidencing very early names in English.⁴⁶ This could be construed as negative evidence for the displacement of the native Welsh in the area at an early date.

As well as being short on Welsh place-names, the area in question is also almost devoid of dedications to Welsh saints, whereas Erging and Anergyng south of the Wye are liberally scattered with dedications to Dyfrig, Dewi, Tysilio and other Welsh saints. Only one, Cynidr, closely associated with Glasbury and Ffynnon Gynidr in south Radnorshire, is linked to the area in any way: it is claimed he had a hermitage on an island at Kinnersley,⁴⁷ on the Wye, (the very edge of Welsh Anergyng), but the church there is now dedicated to St Michael.

The extent of Fferig will remain a mystery. Offa’s Mercian Kingdom had a fixed western boundary along the line of the Dyke as far south as Kington, but in the area between Kington and the Wye, where the earthworks are far from continuous, the frontier must have fluctuated back and forth until the Welsh were finally overwhelmed. The two sections of earthworks, at Garnons Hill and Mansell Gamage and the three further north parallel to the Rowe Ditch may be construed as temporary – but vain – efforts to hold back the tide of Anglo-Saxon expansion.

The western extent of Fferig is equally vague, but the chronicle of its gradual collapse points to a wider expanse than merely the lower reaches of the Wye between Clyro and Hereford – Theophilus refers to Tangwydd inheriting ‘that part of Fferegs now called Radnorshire’ around 796 AD, possibly indicating the south of that county beyond Maelienydd and Elfael, the later cwmwd of Elfael Is-Fynydd, and later to ‘Lower Buellt’ when his son Anharawd succeeded c. 829 AD, presumably the southern ‘panhandle’ of the later Lordship of Buellt from Aberduhonw to Erwood and possibly Llys-wen along the western bank of the river below Builth. This would give Fferig an area taking in Elfael Is-Fynydd in Radnorshire and the Herefordshire hundreds of Elsdon and Staple, as well as the right bank of the Wye from below Builth to Llys-wen. However, the mention of incorporation of part of the territory into Maelienydd⁴⁸ would extend Fferig further north in Radnorshire.

Oral traditions of the Weale family in the Aberllynfi and Builth areas refer to a time when ‘*the Herefordshire Marshes were drained, and the ancestors of the Weales were*

expelled. This borderland surname is most common in south Radnorshire, mid Breconshire and west Herefordshire (34 out of 45 entries in area phone books).⁴⁹ The name derives from *Wealh*, the Anglo-Saxon name for the Welsh. This is the general Germanic term for the Romanised Celts occurring everywhere along the boundary of the Roman Empire: Welsh and Wales, Walloon and Wallonie in Belgium, Valais/Wallis in Switzerland, *Welsch* – Swiss German for the French-speaking cantons, also a German term for the Italians, – and the Vlachs and Wallachians in Romania, all ultimately deriving from *Volcae*, the name of a Celtic tribe in the Jura area on the Gallia-Germania frontier.

We may surmise that Offa's Mercia met with resistance from the 'Ferlicians' on the Herefordshire plain in its expansion south and west, and a series of clashes and battles ensued. At the Battle of Hereford, the Welsh lost control of the fortress of *Caerffawydd*, *The Fort of the Beech Tree*. This is usually interpreted as Hereford itself, but, with its 'Caer' element which often refers to a Roman fort, possibly means the abandoned Roman town of *Kenchester*, a few miles to the northwest. The remainder of *Fferig* was then attached to *Brycheiniog*, but hostilities continued. Eventually, Offa settled Saxons on part of the territory of *Fferig* to hold the fort. The ever-dwindling rump of *Fferig* was lumped with *Brycheiniog*, with which it remained until wrested from the *Brycheinwyr*, the men of *Brecknock*, by *Elystan Glodrydd* and absorbed into *Maelienydd* and *Elfael*, perhaps towards the middle of the tenth century.

Gwenddydd alias *Gwngy* was succeeded around 900 AD as Prince of *Brycheiniog* by *Hwgan*. This King attempted an invasion of *Mercia*, to take advantage of the difficulties the Saxons faced from incursions by the Danes. However, he came up against the formidable *Æthelflæd*, Lady of the *Mercians*, widow of *Æthelred* and daughter of *Alfred the Great*. *Æthelflæd* defeated *Hwgan* in battle somewhere on the borders of his kingdom, referred to as '*Gwaith y Ddinas Newydd*' *the Battle of the New City*, for which the only candidate would seem to be *Hereford*. Afterwards this fierce lady advanced to attack *Breccanamere*, the royal crannog at *Llangors*, from where she abducted *Hwgan's* queen and 34 of her followers, as recorded in the *Anglo Saxon Chronicle*⁵⁰ for the year 916, although *Theophilus* dates this at 914. *Hwgan* fled to *Derby*, to join the Danes against *Æthelflæd*, where he fell in the battle for the besieged fortress 'before *Lammas*' 917.⁵¹ He was succeeded as Prince of *Brycheiniog*, and only *Brycheiniog*, by his son *Dryffin*.

Theophilus Jones adds a footnote to the story of this lost kingdom: 'The small remains of *Fferigs*, which had long been gradually decreasing as well from violence as by partition, were at length torn from the unfortunate *Dryffin* by the arms of *Elystan* surnamed *Glodrydd*, son of *Cynhyllyn* lord of *Maelienydd* and *Builth* . . .'.⁵³ It is interesting to note that *Elystan Glodrydd* is given as the progenitor of the *Lloyds of Rhosfferig*.⁵⁴

BRYNACH PARRI

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GIRALDUS DE BARRI: AN EARLY AMBASSADOR FOR WALES

Gerald Cambrensis – meaning Gerald of Wales or Gerald the Welshman (Gerallt Gymro in Welsh) – implies a name bestowed upon him by his friends or enemies. His family name was probably acquired by his father William de Barri from Barry Island in South Glamorgan. He had married Angharad, daughter of Gerald de Windsor and Nest his wife, who was in turn daughter of Rhys ap Tewdwr, king of Deheubarth (the kingdom of South Wales) in the eleventh century. We know more about him than most mediaeval figures in the British Isles because he wrote so extensively about himself and his involvement in religious and secular affairs. In total, nineteen books have survived, many of which are autobiographical in nature but we still await a comprehensive biography of him.

Gerald is of particular interest to the inhabitants of Llanddew, a mile and a half northeast of Brecon, since he delighted in his home village and looked forward to his retirement there when he could concentrate on his literary activities. He wrote: ‘This is convenient for my studies and my work . . . The house gives me great pleasure and is conducive to thought of the next world’. He had been appointed archdeacon of Brecon by powerful patrons of St. David’s diocese at the age of thirty and had taken up domicile in Llanddew where he owned, by virtue of his office, ‘a small residence and home’ which he greatly loved. These properties – second only in his view to Manorbier Castle in Pembrokeshire, where he was born and which he lovingly describes – were warmly appreciated by him and he looked forward to returning there from his arduous and lengthy travels. He could entertain illustrious visitors there. John Leland, in the sixteenth century, refers to a palace that had become ‘no thing but an onsemeli ruine’.

In 1988, to commemorate the eight hundredth anniversary of Gerald’s journey around Wales, some people followed his expedition around the country on horseback. At Llanddew, the Archbishop of Canterbury, Robert Runcie, shared in the celebrations by administering Communion to a congregation which included all the Welsh bishops as well as the archbishop, in St. David’s church in the village. This church is one of the oldest surviving medieval churches in Breconshire. The author is privileged to have retired to this delightful spot which has such strong historical links.

This essay will attempt to trace some of Gerald’s references to Breconshire and to follow his steps to Rome to argue his case for being elected bishop of Mynyw (St. David) and to fight for the metropolitan status of the church in Wales.

Gerald: the ambivalent Welshman

The opening paragraph warns us that Gerald cannot easily be pigeonholed and that his mixed descent radically affected his loyalties at different periods in his life.



Plate 1 The statue of Gerald of Wales at Cardiff City Hall

He was certainly proud of his Norman lineage but equally he valued his Welsh descent from a royal line. Yet this duality confused his own sense of identity: sometimes he paraded his Norman credentials, at other times his Welsh.

This duality is perhaps most powerfully expressed in his volume *The Description of Wales* written, of course in Latin – indeed in excellent Latin, for his prose surpasses that of most writers of his day. He finished his first version of this volume in 1199 and it contains an account of the geography and history of Wales as well as a description of the strengths and weaknesses of the Welsh people. He describes their customs and manners: their frugality is noteworthy for ‘. . . they are given neither to gluttony nor to drunkenness. They spend little on food or clothes. Their sole interest in life consists of caring for their horses and keeping their weapons in good order’. Their hospitality is also commendable: ‘In Wales no one begs. Everyone’s home is open to all, for the Welsh generosity and hospitality are the greatest of all virtues’. He informs us that ‘the men and women cut their hair short and shape it round their ears and eyes . . . The women cover their heads with a flowing white veil, which sticks up in folds like a crown . . . Both sexes take great care of their teeth, more than I have seen in any country. They are constantly cleaning them with green hazel-shoots and then rubbing them with woollen cloths until they shine like ivory. To protect their teeth they never eat hot food, but only what is cold, or tepid or slightly warm. The men shave their beards, leaving only their moustaches. This is not a new habit, but one which goes back to time immemorial’. He proceeds to describe their sharpness and intelligence [for] ‘when they apply their minds to anything, they are quick to make progress, for they have great natural ability. They are quicker-witted and more shrewd than any other Western people’. Their musical capabilities are also noteworthy: ‘When they play their instruments they charm and delight the ear with the sweetness of their music. They play quickly and in subtle harmony. Their fingering is so rapid that they produce harmony out of discord’. He comments that ‘Nature has endowed the Welsh with great boldness in speaking and great confidence in answering . . . even in the presence of their princes and chieftains . . . This is true of all of them, from the highest to the lowest’. Thus he describes the good qualities of Welsh life at great length.

This kind of information provides us with a unique insight into life in Wales in the late twelfth century but in the second part of the book Gerald confronts us with less pleasing aspects of the Welsh character. He lists their inconstancy and instability and their failure to keep their word or carry out their promises; they live on plunder and have no regard for the bonds of peace and friendship. Then he accuses them of weakness in battle: how shamefully and ignobly they run away. He has previously praised their qualities as fighters: ‘They are so agile and fierce that they often win battles fought against the odds. They use light weapons which do not impede their quick movements . . . Their leaders ride into battle on

swift mettlesome horses which are bred locally. Most of the common people prefer to fight on foot'. But now he proceeds to suggest ways in which the Welsh could be conquered, for both the Anglo-Saxons and Normans had largely failed. 'The Norman conquest of England was sweeping and lasting; the resistance in Wales took two centuries to be broken' and this despite the fact that Norman lordships had been established along the Marches and in Glamorgan and Pembrokeshire.

At this stage in his career when he is still hoping for preferment from the king, he obviously writes to please the Normans and he offers detailed practical suggestions on how the Welsh could be defeated. In essence, he suggests that anyone facing the effective guerrilla tactics of the tough fighters of the hills and the marshes should spend a year reconnoitring the land and be prepared to spend a long time subduing them and learn how to sow dissension among them and to stir them up against each other with promises and bribes. Many castles should be built with ample provisions available; ships should patrol the seas; cloth, salt and corn which were normally imported from England should be prohibited; the assault troops which would attack the Welshmen in the hills must be lightly armed and not weighed down with a lot of equipment 'for against an army so mobile and lightly armed as the Welsh, who always prefer to do battle on rough terrain, you need troops with little equipment and who are used to this kind of warfare'.

Gerald then proceeds to give advice on how Wales should be governed once it was conquered and concludes that one of the reasons the Welsh face ruin is that, because of 'their natural pride and obstinacy, they will not order themselves as other nations do so successfully, but refuse to accept the rule and dominion of one single king'. It is no accident that Edward I was to fulfil many of these requirements in his conquest of Wales in the thirteenth century. Gerald had provided comprehensive information on how best to proceed. Moreover, his knowledge of the Welsh character and his previous expeditions to Ireland (where he participated, with his Norman relatives, in their attempts to subdue that country), were invaluable in formulating his advice. He obviously had first-hand knowledge of military matters in order to proffer such detailed guidance. He also suggested at one point that the best way to deal with the Welsh was to transport them over the border and settle them in England – a kind of ethnic cleansing!

In the last chapter of his book he puts forward ways in which the Welsh might fight back, because he himself was 'descended from both peoples, and it seems fair that I should now put the opposite point of view'. He proposes that they should learn to fight in the French way, that is 'in ordered ranks instead of leaping about all over the place' and that 'their princes should come to an agreement and unite to defend their country or, better still, if they only had one prince and he a good one . . . I cannot see how so powerful a people could ever be conquered. If they were united, no one could ever beat them. They have three great advantages: their country is fortified by nature; they are accustomed to live on very little, and this

satisfies them; and the entire nation, both leaders and common people, are trained in the use of arms. The English are striving for power, the Welsh for freedom; the English are fighting for material gain, the Welsh to avoid disaster; the English soldiers are hired mercenaries, the Welsh are defending their homeland'.

He concludes by recalling the military expedition 'which Henry II, King of the English, led against them in South Wales in our own lifetime (i.e. in 1163) when an old man living in Pencader . . . was asked what he thought of the royal army, whether it could withstand the rebel troops and what the outcome of the war would be. 'My Lord King,' he replied, 'this nation may now be harassed, weakened and decimated by your soldiery, as it has so often by others in former times, but it will never be totally destroyed by the wrath of man, unless at the same time it is punished by the wrath of God. Whatever else may come to pass, I do not think that on the Day of Direst Judgement any other race other than the Welsh, or any other language, will give answer to the Supreme Judge of all for this small corner of the earth'. Elsewhere in his voluminous writings Gerald does not hesitate to chastise the Welsh but at the close of this volume he seems to assert Welsh nationality with a powerful statement to which he is fully sympathetic.

His tortuous attempts at defining his nation and its people and indeed at refining his own sense of identity will find echoes in many countries today, not least in Britain which is a nation-state, not a nation, where great efforts are being made at defining Britishness. We should conclude by claiming that Gerald probably took great steps in defining what the Romans meant by *natio* and what made Wales a nation.

This however, is not the only echo in Gerald's life and writings that we find relevant today; he was patently not only a Cambro-Norman but he was also, strikingly, a great European.

Gerald accompanies the Archbishop of Canterbury around Wales

When Gerald was invited to accompany Baldwin, the archbishop of Canterbury, on his perambulations throughout Wales in 1188 to encourage men to take the 'sign of the Cross' – a recruitment drive for the Third Crusade against the Turkish invaders of Jerusalem – he agreed with alacrity and uses his experiences on the tour to write his major work *The Journey Through Wales*. There was a political edge to this journey for Baldwin celebrated high mass at the four diocesan cathedrals signifying that they were within the jurisdiction of Canterbury – an issue which Gerald was to challenge later in his career when he became convinced that the Welsh Church should have metropolitan status independently of England, having direct access to the Vatican. But he was not wholly aware of all the political and ecclesiastical gerrymandering that was occurring in the complex relationships between Norman lords, Plantagenet kings

and archbishops, and Welsh princes and church leaders. His acquaintance with the country's rulers and his knowledge of Wales made him a valued companion on the journey. His book is a most enjoyable and instructive read because of its gossipy, journalistic, and colourful character. Gerald was insatiably curious. It is all somewhat discursive but he enlivens the story with vivid descriptions of people and places, of historical events and folk-tales, of anecdotes and mishaps.

For instance, he recounts fascinating tales about Llan-gors Lake, Merthyr Cynog, Bronllys, Hay, Llowes and Llanhamlach. He relates how 'a boy tried to steal some pigeons from a nest in Saint David's church in Llanfaes. His hand struck fast to the stone on which he was leaning, this being no doubt a miraculous punishment inflicted by the saint, who was protecting the birds in his own church. For three days and nights the boy, accompanied by his parents and his friends, offered vigils, fasts and prayers at the church altar. On the third day, by God's intervention, the power which held his hand fast was loosened and he was released from the miraculous force which bound him there to the stone. I myself saw this same boy, then no longer young but become an old man living in Newbury in England, for so the years had passed, when he appeared before David II, bishop of St. David's, and confirmed that these events really had occurred, the reason for this being of course, that they had taken place in that bishop's own diocese. This stone is preserved to this day among the relics of the church in question, with the marks of the boy's fingers pressed into the flint as though in wax and clearly visible'. However, the present church, a nineteenth century rebuilding of the original – shows no trace of this stone.

In recent years there has been renewed interest in Brecon in observing Saint Eluned's feast-day on August 1st. She was a virgin-martyr who was killed for refusing to marry a wealthy prince and the church which bore her name stood on the hill, in the Slwch area, and was still standing on 1698. Eluned was one of the twenty four daughters of Brychan, a king of the fifth century who gave Brycheiniog its name. Gerald writes, 'she refused the hand of an earthly ruler and married instead the King Eternal, thus triumphing in an ecstasy of self-denial. Each year on the first day of August her feast-day is celebrated with great solemnity in this same place. On that day great crowds of ordinary folk assemble there from far and wide . . . You can see young men and maidens, some in the church itself, some in the church yard and others in the dance which threads its way round the graves. They sing traditional songs (but) all of a sudden they collapse on the ground, and then those who, until now, have followed their leader peacefully as if in a trance, leap in the air as if seized by frenzy . . . When all is over, they enter the church. They are led up to the altar and there, as they make their oblation, you will be surprised to see them awaken from their trance and recover their normal composure . . . By taking part in these festivities, many men at once see and feel in their hearts the remission of their sins, and are absolved and pardoned'.

In the paragraph that follows we have a vivid description of the district. Gerald writes: 'The region produces a great amount of corn . . . There is ample pasture and plenty of woodland, the first full of cattle, the second teeming with wild animals. There is no lack of freshwater fish, both in the Usk and Wye. Salmon and trout are fished from these rivers, but the Wye had more salmon and the Usk more trout. In winter salmon are in season in the Wye, but in summer they abound in the Usk. The Wye is particularly rich in grayling, an excellent fish which some call umber. Brecknock Mere [Llangors Lake], a broad expanse of water which is very well known, supplies plenty of pike, perch, tench, excellent trout and mud-loving eels for the local inhabitants'.

This and Gerald's other publications provide a wealth of information about the age in which he lived. We need to acknowledge that it was laborious and costly to prepare books at this time but Gerald managed to provide a copy for Henry II which the king apparently enjoyed reading, and later he personally presented Pope Innocent III with a copy which he greatly appreciated. He succeeded in advertising the book by reading it, over three days, before a large crowd at Oxford where 'of all places in England the clergy were most strong and pre-eminent in learning'.

Gerald himself shines through his writings: his foibles, prejudices and superstitions which make him a human, even loveable, figure but also truly a man of his own age. But we also encounter a true scholar. One historian described him as 'one of the most learned men in a learned age'. Another historian has written, 'His observant eyes, his retentive memory, his ability to note interesting and relevant features, as well as his fluent prose, has given us books incomparable in their descriptive power and priceless as historical documents'.

This fascinating volume was written at his Llanddew residence in 1191 and he must have made a striking figure in the village. According to his own description he was tall and handsome and physically strong – with thick shaggy eyebrows – characteristics which were to make him recognizable on the continent, leading to his capture in France at one juncture later in this career.

Gerald the Reformer

Yet he would not have been unreservedly liked for he had excommunicated the elderly incumbent of Llanddew, archdeacon Jordan, for concubinage or possibly for being married. Following his education in Paris where he had acquired a reforming zeal, he thought that all clergy should be celibate, although the Church in Ireland and Wales was reluctant to accept this ruling and defended the well-established, marital status of the priests; however Jordan was dismissed to make way for Gerald. He was a determined reformer and he did succeed in disciplining the clergy throughout the diocese of St. David's to obey Roman church



Plate 2 The church at Llanddew, part of which dates from the twelfth century

law and likewise ensured that tithes were regularly paid by laymen. He hoped that this loyal service would eventually find favour with archbishop and king.

His reforming zeal initially knew no bounds: he rounded on his clergy and demanded higher standards of morality and gravity, reflecting a significant trend within the Roman Church as a whole – as is illustrated by *The Jewel of the Church*, a work he wrote for their benefit, with stories as racy as they are apposite. He attacks a knight from Hay, for instance, who had been misappropriating the offerings and tithes of the church there with impunity because he was the priest's brother. Gerald at once put an end to this irregularity, though not without difficulty and only after he had fined and threatened the knight.

Soon after his elevation to archdeacon he heard that Adam, bishop of Llanelwy (St. Asaph) was intent on appropriating the parish church of Ceri to his diocese. Ceri (Kerry) is about four miles east of Newtown in north Powys at the extreme northeastern boundary of St. David's diocese. Gerald proceeded posthaste from Llanddew (which he consistently spells as Llandduw) despite the reluctance of his friends to accompany him. En route he contacted clerics and princes to send men to support him and he spent the night in Llanbister before proceeding to the church at Ceri. The keys were hidden from him but he managed to find them and having entered, the bells were rung to signify investiture and possession and he caused mass to be celebrated. Then the bishop

of Llanelwy arrived and a severe standoff occurred when both the archdeacon, Gerald, and the bishop, Adam, excommunicated each other! (Gerald comments that the bishop was haughty and presumptuous and indulging his own arrogance, despite the fact that they had been ‘comrades and fellow-scholars in Paris’). The confrontation continued but Gerald held out in defence of the diocesan boundary because he feared that Adam, if he won the day, would appropriate all the churches between the Wye and the Severn. The verbal battle only came to an end when Gerald ordered ‘that the bells of the church should be rung at triple intervals for the shaming of his adversaries . . . And when this was done, since the Welsh greatly dread such ringing of bells when they are rung against themselves, the bishop and his men straightaway broke off their sentence of excommunication and mounting their horses made off as fast as they could. The people who had gathered to witness the spectacle pursued them as they fled with clods and sticks and stones’. The whole episode takes on a comic character for us but it was obviously serious for the protagonists. When Gerald reported the event to the king, he was duly impressed but he also found it hilarious that an archdeacon had excommunicated a bishop and regaled his court with the story.

In these and similar happenings we can see that the young archdeacon was intent on reforming the church but that he was also beginning to see himself as a defender of the ancient rights of Mynyw [i.e. Menevia or the diocese of St. David’s] and to gain the ear of the king. He had grounds for expecting that he would soon be elected as bishop but this was not to be, for despite his most strenuous efforts, and despite his obvious qualifications as a scholar, reformer, courageous defender and leader, his Welsh sympathies made him *persona non grata* to both king and archbishop. When he strove to establish the metropolitan rights of Mynyw and of Wales they became adamant in their opposition.

Gerald’s ambitions are thwarted

By 1199 Gerald had been rejected a few times for the incumbency of the bishopric of Mynwy despite his excellent credentials from a Welsh point of view. The joint forces of king and archbishop thwarted every valid and valiant effort on his part but he was nothing if not determined and courageous and his initial claim to be appointed as bishop of St. David’s was soon extended to claim that the Welsh Church should be independent of Canterbury and answerable only to the pope in Rome – as was already the case with Ireland and Scotland. This was the context in which he visited Rome four times in the period between 1199 and 1203. These were the reasons why Giraldus Cambrensis at the age of 54, committed himself unstintingly for the next four years to coerce king, archbishop and anyone else who mattered, of the justice of his cause. In particular he made direct advances to Pope Innocent III since he came to believe that there was no

need to acquire the agreement of Canterbury. It is however important to appreciate that the issue of Mynyw and Wales's status was enmeshed in the political and ecclesiastical wrangles of the day and we must acknowledge the symbiotic nature of church and state. The king and archbishop were united in their apprehension of the Welsh and believed strongly that the country should be subservient to their authority. They saw that a largely independent church allied to the native princes could prove a threat to their interests.

Gerald reveals to us the nature of the debate. Henry II, astute man that he was, obviously valued his extraordinary talents but he remained suspicious of him. Gerald writes in one of his books, *Speculum Ecclesiae* [The Mirror of the Church], that reluctant as he was to abandon the life of a scholar (and he had been a lecturer at Paris for a while) he became chaplain to the king and clerk to the court – and thereby a member of the king's inner circle. (He served the king for ten years). He claims that the king ignored him as far as preferments were concerned and that he was sidelined by 'unworthy persons and empty promises . . . Yet in secret the King praised him mightily in the presence of his counsellors and approved his character, his self-restraint, his modesty and his fidelity, saying that if he had not been born in Wales and bound so closely by ties of blood to the magnates of Wales, and more especially Rhys [Lord of Deheubarth], he would have exalted him by the bestowal of ecclesiastical dignities and rich rewards and would have made him a great man in his kingdom'. (Gerald writes of himself, with few exceptions, in the third person). According to the king, 'Nothing barred his way to higher promotion save his nation and his kinship'.

So, despite all his attempts to prove his loyalty, Gerald's ambitions were thwarted. It is true that he was offered two bishoprics in Ireland and two in Wales, but these he firmly rejected because he was determined to be appointed bishop of the ancient see of Mynyw. In the early years of this acrimonious debate, Gerald had the firm support of the cathedral chapter of Mynyw and in fact he had a few supporters in England who perceived him as a valued counter to the growing power of the archbishop of Canterbury. At a later stage, in 1203, when Walter Hubert had become archbishop, Gerald wrote a lengthy and vitriolic letter replying to a letter he had received from him. Gerald warned him that if a bishop were to be imposed upon Mynyw he would never be accepted because: 'The chapter of Mynyw will never consent to the election of a monk or a physician [Geoffrey, prior of Llanthony Secunda in Gloucester was a candidate], wholly ignorant of their native tongue and unable to preach or hear confession save through an interpreter. For we seek a physician for our souls, not a conductor of funerals, nor do we wish to have a dumb dog or a tongueless shepherd set over us'.

Following considerable controversy, the canons of Mynyw eventually entreated Gerald 'to go to Rome to vindicate the metropolitan rights of the

church'. The chapter also sent a strongly worded letter to the Pope stating that they had 'canonically and with one accord elected our Archdeacon Master Giraldus (to be bishop) . . . in preference to all the others both from the King of England and from the Archbishop of Canterbury'. They strongly objected to a bishop being imposed upon them who was 'totally ignorant of our native tongue and the customs of our country' and asked for his protection, requesting him 'to confirm and consecrate our Elect, a man well-lettered, discreet and honourable'. So, Gerald and his retinue embarked on the first of four hazardous journeys to Rome. His brother, Philip, gives him advice and support, saying – 'Brother, it is a difficult matter and a laborious one on which you are entering, very costly also and full of peril . . .'

Gerald's visits to Rome, 1199–1203 and 1207

Between 1199 and 1203 Gerald made three visits to Rome; such journeys, involving much discomfort and no little danger, testify to the determination with which he pressed his cause. For a man in his mid to late fifties the sheer physical achievement is daunting. On his first journey war in France necessitated a detour through the Ardennes; on the second visit Gerald arrived in Rome on March 4th so most of the travelling was done in winter when the Alpine passes posed considerable hazards. But it was the third expedition which was the most dangerous; he was captured twice – once on each leg of the journey in France where he was mistaken for a supporter of King John who was at war with Philippe Augustus – and in Bologna he was imprisoned by his creditors.

Gerald braved such dangers in order to gain audiences with Pope Innocent III whom he hoped to convince he should be appointed bishop of St. David's and that the Welsh see should be elevated to metropolitan status thus becoming independent of Canterbury. However the problems confronting Gerald in Rome were as formidable – though of a different nature – to those he faced on his journeys. The Archbishop of Canterbury, Hubert Walter, was also the king's principal minister and he had agents in Rome who worked tirelessly to persuade the Pope not to accede to Gerald's requests. In his account of the debates at Rome Gerald discredited his opponents; Reginald Foliot for example, is described as 'the most corrupted among the corrupt . . . [and] . . . a creature of fawning manners and lipping speech, so wholly beardless that from outward view none could tell whether he were a man or a woman'. Another of the archbishop's men, Osbert, was compared to 'the gurgolio . . . a worm dwelling entirely within the throat, bursting at a light touch with a sound and also a stench'. Such opponents were no match for the powerful arguments – supported by papal precedents – which Gerald advanced to support his claims. He also told the Pope that he was supported by the Welsh princes and in particular by Llywelyn the ruler of Gwynedd.

Gerald enjoyed animated conversations with Innocent and the Pope seemed to be impressed by the force of his arguments, on one occasion he even addressed Gerald as ‘archbishop’. But the Pope was a diplomat who had to avoid upsetting important figures like the king of England and he vacillated when Gerald wanted him to make decisions in his favour. St. David’s remained subservient to Canterbury – in 1207 Stephen Langton succeeded Hubert Walter as primate – and the wrangling over the appointment to the see ended with the consecration of Iorwerth (at Staines in Middlesex) in 1215. This was a partial success for Gerald as Iorwerth was a Welshman who had been abbot of the Premonstratensian house at Talylychau (Talley) near Llandeilo and was supported by Llywelyn the Great. Iorwerth was a great deal more acceptable to Gerald than some of the men who had been considered earlier, three of whom had been castigated individually by Gerald as virtually illiterate, a bastard and a notorious fornicator.

The indefatigable traveller was on his way to Rome again in 1207, at the age of sixty-two. This time Gerald explained that his purpose was ‘solely by way of pilgrimage and devotion, in order that the labours of the journey, by giving of alms – and of true confession and absolution, all the stains contracted in his past life . . . might be wiped away past all doubt’.

Gerald’s latter years

Gerald was to live for another twenty years and he spent his time, probably at Lincoln, writing and counselling but his peace was disturbed yet once more by events in Llanddew. He had taken his nephew, another Gerald, under his wing and had provided for his education as well as giving him material support. He even succeeded in promoting him to the archdeaconry of Brecon in his stead. Instead of being grateful for this kindness the nephew, who had proved himself a poor scholar, used dishonest and wily ways to deceive and rob his uncle. He was aided and abetted in his scheming to misappropriate Gerald’s financial rights, which he had not relinquished, by a nefarious monk called William Capella who was his tutor. They – and the bishop of Mynyw who backed them – connived, by deceit and slander, to undermine Gerald’s authority and to deprive him of income due to him from his holdings in Llanddew.

Gerald had maintained that he should continue to manage the archdeaconry’s business and income but the rogues plotted to deprive him of these benefits. His hopes for a quiet life were shattered. There is no doubt that he was angry at these vacillating Welshmen and their ultimate failure to stand by him but he was incensed by this betrayal of his nephew. He responded by writing a book *Speculum Duorum* (The Mirror of Two Men) which is a full-blooded attack on his deceivers. This is a substantial volume and probably the last he wrote. His fighting qualities are apparent as he rounds on them; his vituperative style makes for enjoyable

reading today and the tone is set by the very first sentence, 'Master Giraldus de Barri to Giraldus, archdeacon of Brecon, his nephew – a word justly derived from the Latin for a scorpion – the greeting and salutation he deserves'. Capella strove to prevent a possible reconciliation between Master Giraldus and his nephew. Gerald lost control over a grange-farm at Llanddew and bitterly accused Capella (whom he calls 'the Whoreson') of having brought his sisters and his concubine and his whole household there. Gerald was robbed of all income from the sale of crops and from the church and the 'rich vicarage of the church'.

There is no doubt that Gerald had been very badly treated but he had enough spirit to rise to his own defence with gusto; in doing so he has given us a unique insight into life in Wales at the beginning of the thirteenth century. According to Michael Richter, the work as a whole 'is one of Gerald's most intimate and personal works . . . It offers a deep insight into the mind of the ageing Giraldus, a vain and vulnerable man of considerable learning . . . [it is] adorned with a great variety of quotations from the Bible, the Fathers, and other authors, both classical and mediaeval, in which Gerald bewailed the corruption of human nature'.

It is difficult to sum up Gerald's life and work but we can claim that although he failed in his attempt to become bishop of Mynwy his passionate stand for the metropolitan status of the church in Wales heightened a sense of Welsh nationhood and the issue was not resolved one way or the other. This essay has attempted to shoe (albeit briefly) the international stature and involvement of the man: he was known and respected by many figures of authority in the Europe of his day and he argued his case across national boundaries. As we debate the significance of our European role today we can but be challenged by the readiness of Gerald to accept his role so naturally. When we consider the question of national identity and ponder the whole issue of 'who we are', we would do well to consider Gerald's contribution: his honesty in describing the foibles and weaknesses as well as the good traits of the Welsh – many of which appertain today – and his willingness to identify with them, at great sacrifice to himself, in the face of powerful and determined enemies who wished to subdue this awkward little nation of ours.

One last thought: the Roman Catholic Church in Wales acquired its first archbishop in 1916 and his seat is based in Cardiff. The Anglican Church in Wales, which did not exist in Gerald's day, has an archbishop who is also based at present at Cardiff although his location will depend on the diocese he occupied as bishop prior to his election as archbishop. On both counts, Gerald's hopes of having Mynyw accepted as a metropolitan seat have not been realized although the national status of both churches has been established.

HERBERT HUGHES

NOTES

Most of the quotations are taken from Butler, H. E., *The Autobiography of Giraldus Cambrensis*, 1936.

Further reading:

Dr David Walker published an essay on Gerald in *Brycheiniog*, XVIII, 1978–79, which draws on material he had published earlier. I have attempted not to duplicate his scholarly work but rather to raise certain pertinent issues which are reflected in Gerald's life and work.

Bartlett, R., *Gerald of Wales*, 1982.

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YSTRAD YW, 1208: A HAVEN FOR ARWYSTLI EXILES?

The spring of 1208 saw the fall from royal favour of William de Braose, lord of Brecon and other extensive territories in the March, and the late summer witnessed his flight to Ireland in an attempt to escape King John's wrath. A part of the territory of Brecon became a new lordship, that of Blaenllyfni, in the hands of Peter fitz Herbert, one of the king's close associates, who had laid claim to a third part of Brecon lordship in 1206.¹ As Braose fled from the March, an attack on Blaenllyfni was made by his old adversary, Gwenwynwyn of southern Powys, and this in turn was the prelude to Gwenwynwyn's seizure and detention by John in October.²

These stirring events may prove to provide the context for a charter issued in 1208 by a member of the native dynasty of Arwystli, the cantref which occupied the areas surrounding the upper waters of the Severn in mid-Wales. The local dynasty appears to have been displaced as the ruling house of the cantref in 1197 when, as recorded in *Brut y Tywysogion*, and confirmed by charter evidence, Gwenwynwyn of southern Powys subdued Arwystli.³ In the 1208 charter, Meurig ap Hywel, one of the sons of Hywel ab Ieuaf (king of Arwystli from 1132 until his death in 1185), granted lands in the cantref to the abbey of Strata Marcella. The grant was dated 1208 *apud Strad Dewi*.⁴ It is initially tempting to assume that this indicates that the charter was given in Ystrad Tywi, for that region was a frequent refuge for descendants of Hywel ab Ieuaf who were forced to flee from Arwystli in the decades after 1197. Cadwallon ap Hywel had issued a charter from Llanymddyfri (Llandoverly) in 1206, whilst Dafydd ab Owain o'r Brithdir ap Hywel, and his brother Owain were also to issue grants dated at Llanymddyfri in 1215.⁵ But it may be observed that these documents were dated *apud Lanamdeueri/Llanamdiuri* rather than in Ystrad Tywi.

David Cathcart King called attention to a tendency for Welsh castles to be designated by the name of the larger administrative or seigneurial unit in which they lay. Amongst the examples cited by Cathcart King was the castle of Tretower, which appears in the early 1230s as Stratdewy.⁶ This creates more than a suspicion that the Strad Dewi of 1208 may represent Ystrad Yw, and within that territory the castle of Tretower. Ystrad Yw formed, of course, part of the lordship of Brecon, and subsequently of that of Blaenllyfni.⁷

In political terms such an identification is not at all unlikely. There was a distinct tendency for members of the dynasty of Arwystli to take refuge with lords who can be identified as actually or potentially hostile to Gwenwynwyn. The sons of Gruffudd ap Rhys in Ystrad Tywi and Owain Brogyntyn, probably in Edeirnion, all received and maintained exiles from Arwystli. Each of the rulers who apparently offered shelter to Arwystli exiles was associated in the early part of the thirteenth century with Gwenwynwyn's great adversary, Llywelyn ab

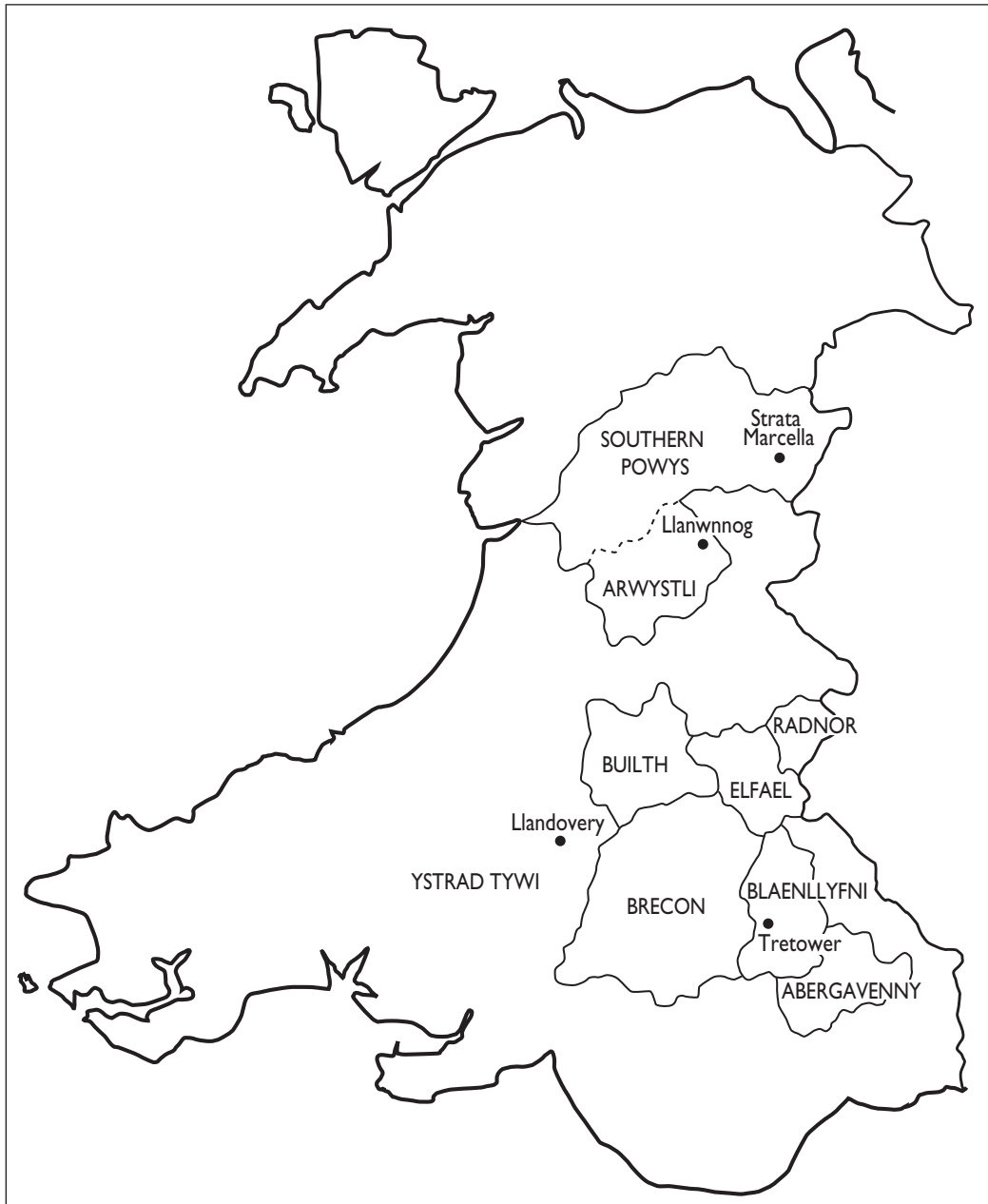


Fig. 1 Principal places mentioned in the text

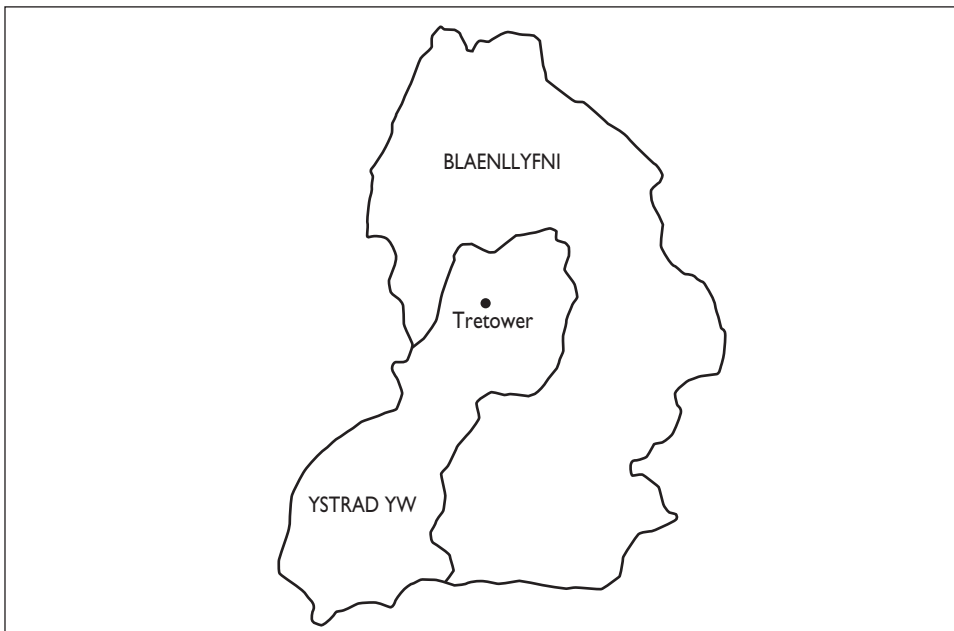


Fig. 2 Blaenllyfni

Iorwerth of Gwynedd.⁸ Now, since the closing years of the twelfth century Gwenwynwyn had been waging an intermittent struggle against William de Braose, lord of Brecon. In 1198 he had launched a major campaign against Painscastle, the Braose stronghold in Elfael, and his defeat there had so weakened the lord of Powys that his brief pre-eminence in the politics of Wales came to an end.⁹ In 1202 the contest had begun anew, and war was still being waged in 1204.¹⁰ This suggests that Braose may have appeared as an attractive potential protector for men who still nurtured hopes of recovering Arwystli from the lord of southern Powys. The 1208 charter makes it clear that we are dealing not just with a single member of the displaced Arwystli dynasty but with a group of lords of that family, for the witnesses to Meurig's grant include the names of Gruffudd Goch and Cadwaladr ap Hywel. Of these, Cadwaladr ap Hywel was certainly Meurig's brother, and had himself granted lands to Strata Marcella shortly before the annexation of Arwystli by Gwenwynwyn in 1197;¹¹ Gruffudd Goch was either a son or grandson of Hywel ab Ieuf and had granted lands in Arwystli to Strata Marcella in 1207.¹² It is possible that this latter grant, which was made at Llanwnnog firmly within Arwystli itself, represented an assertion of lordship, however limited, which was seen as a challenge by Gwenwynwyn and which resulted in Gruffudd's expulsion. Gruffudd Goch was to appear again in Arwystli after Llywelyn ap Iorwerth had established his lordship there in

c.1216.¹³ The 1208 charter is most likely to have been granted during William de Braose's final months as the effective lord of Brecon – that is between 25th March 1208 and his flight to Ireland, an event which *Annales Cambriae* ascribed to the period around Michaelmas (i.e. late September of that year).¹⁴ We can assume that the grant was made after 25th March as that day was taken by the Cistercians as the first day of the new year and the 1208 document shows signs of having been drawn up by a scribe from Strata Marcella itself.¹⁵ It is just conceivable that the issue of the charter followed the fall of Gwenwynwyn in early October and preceded, albeit briefly, Llywelyn ab Iorwerth's assertion of control in the latter's territories. Both versions of *Brut y Tywysogion* record Llywelyn as entering Gwenwynwyn's territory as soon as the latter was detained by King John.¹⁶ On the other hand one of the Welsh Latin chronicles, *Cronica de Wallia* suggests that there was an interval between Gwenwynwyn's seizure by the king and Llywelyn's appropriation of southern Powys.¹⁷ The issue of the 1208 charter may well exemplify the tendency of Strata Marcella to secure grants or confirmations of grants from members of the former ruling dynasty of Arwystli at moments of political turbulence. It seems possible that the abbey sought to obtain such charters whenever there was a possibility that the former rulers might be able to revive their power in the cantref.¹⁸ For the exiled members of the Arwystli dynasty, the issue of such charters constituted an important assertion of their right to that land. The 1208 grant is less likely to have been sought by Strata Marcella once it became clear that Gwenwynwyn had been detained by John and that Llywelyn had established a relatively secure control over the lands of southern Powys.

If the above analysis is correct then it provokes an interesting reflection. The tactic of giving shelter to dissident elements from within Welsh polities in order to make future political use of them as destabilising forces was a characteristic of English royal policy towards Wales in much of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. The apparent reception of Arwystli exiles within the lordship of Brecon suggests that a similar practice was not unknown amongst the Marcher lords themselves. The harbouring in Ystrad Yw of Meurig ap Hywel and other members of the native dynasty of Arwystli may also explain why Gwenwynwyn's aggression against former Braose territory seems to have been concentrated against Blaenllyfni,¹⁹ a land which lay at a considerable distance from the territories of the lord of southern Powys. Whilst it may well be the case that he 'deemed the opportunity a favourable one for reviving his old scheme of conquest in Mid Wales',²⁰ Gwenwynwyn may well have been prompted by a resolve to root out from their place of refuge men who threatened his control over Arwystli.²¹

DAVID STEPHENSON

NOTES

¹ See Holden, Brock W. 'King John, the Braoses, and the Celtic fringe', *Albion, Journal of British Studies* 33 (2001), pp. 1-23, at p. 10. This article provides excellent background for the present paper. There is no warrant for the comment on the Braose territories in Pollock, Melissa 'Rebels of the West, 1209-16', *Cambrian Medieval Celtic Studies* 50 (2005), p. 8 that 'William's lands in South Wales bordered those of the lords of Powys who were . . . a threat to Briouze [sic] from the west'.

² Lloyd, J. E. *A History of Wales* (3rd ed., 1939), ii p. 620 and notes 47-9.

³ Jones, Thomas (ed.) *Brut y Tywysogion . . . Red Book of Hergest Version*, Cardiff (1955), pp. 180-81. See also Pryce, Huw (ed.) *The Acts of Welsh Rulers 1120-1283*, Cardiff (2005), nos. 545, 547, 556.

⁴ *Ibid.*, no. 6. Strata Marcella was founded c.1170 on land close to the future location of the town of Welshpool: *ibid.*, no. 539 and references there cited. The dynasty of Arwystli had already begun to grant lands to Strata Marcella before Gwenwynwyn's annexation of the cantref in 1197: *ibid.*, no. 7.

⁵ *Ibid.*, nos. 9, 11, 13.

⁶ King, D. J. Cathcart 'Castles and the Administrative Divisions of Wales: a Study of Names', *Welsh History Review*, 10 (1980), pp. 93-96, at 95, and *Calendar of Close Rolls 1231-4*, p. 328.

⁷ See map 1 and Rees, William 'The Medieval Lordship of Brecon', *Transactions of the Honourable Society of Cymmrodorion* (1915-16), pp. 179, 206. The formal escheat of the Braose lands and the grant of Blaenllyfni as a separate lordship to Peter fitz Herbert did not take place until 1211 (*ibid.*, 182 and references there cited), but already by the late summer of 1208 fitz Herbert seems to have been in effective occupation of Blaenllyfni: Lloyd, J. E. *op. cit.*, p. 621. See also Richards, Melville *Welsh Administrative and Territorial Units*, Cardiff (1969), p. 323. It may be of significance that the references to Ystrad Tywi in texts such as *Annales Cambriae* and *Cronica de Wallia* take forms such as *Ystrat/estrat Tywi/Tywy*, *Strattui*, *Stratewy*, *Stratewi*, *Estratewy*, *Stratchewy*. See Williams ab Ithel, J. (ed.), *Annales Cambriae*, Rolls Series (1860) pp. 15, 24, 30, 93, 104 and Jones, Thomas (ed.) 'Cronica de Wallia and other documents from Exeter Cathedral Library MS 3514', *Bulletin of the Board of Celtic Studies* xii (1946), pp. 9, 14, 15, 17. In contrast, there is a distinct tendency for Ystrad Yw to appear as *Stradewi* or some similar form in twelfth and thirteenth century sources: see Morgan, Richard and Powell, R. F. Peter *A Study of Breconshire Place-Names*, Llanrwst (1999), pp. 156-57. The tenant of William de Braose in Ystrad Yw, and thus the holder of the castle, was John Picard, who seems to have been closely associated with his lord, in 1209 he was required by the king to hand over his son Milo as a hostage, and was himself subsequently imprisoned in Hereford: see Radford, C. A. Raleigh, 'Tretower: the Castle and the Court', *Brycheiniog*, VI (1960), pp. 1-50, at p. 7.

⁸ Stephenson, David 'The Most Powerful Persons in the Land: Patterns of Power and Authority in Arwystli in the Twelfth and Thirteenth Centuries', *Montgomeryshire Collections* 93 (2005), pp. 17-36, especially 27. The discussion of Meurig ap Hywel's 1208 charter, *ibid.*, 28 needs to be modified in the light of the present paper. On the relations of the sons of Gruffudd ap Rhys with Llywelyn ap Iorwerth see Lloyd, J. E., *op. cit.*, pp. 621, 634 and for Owain Brogyntyn see Pryce, *op. cit.*, pp. 38-39.

⁹ Lloyd, J. E. *op. cit.*, pp. 585-87.

¹⁰ Holden *art. cit.*, p. 7 n. 32.

¹¹ Pryce *op. cit.*, no. 7.

¹² *Ibid.*, no. 10, and for further discussion Stephenson *art. cit.*, p. 28 n.66.

¹³ Pryce *op. cit.*, no.16.

¹⁴ Williams ab Ithel J. *op. cit.*, p. 66 (from the C text).

¹⁵ On the one hand it is noteworthy that there is no representative of Strata Marcella recorded in the witness-list to Meurig's charter, whilst that document does not include the concession to the abbey of all the pastures of Arwystli between the Severn and Powys which is a common feature of

grants made to Strata Marcella by members of the former ruling house of Arwystli, wherever issued. See Stephenson, David 'Rhyd yr Onen Castle: Politics and Possession in Western Arwystli in the Later Twelfth Century', *Montgomeryshire Collections* 94 (2006), pp. 15–22. Against this, the sealing and dating clause of Meurig's charter employs a formula which may indicate the influence of a clerk from Strata Marcella. This involves the use of the phrase *anno ab incarnatione domini* + date, which occurs frequently in grants by members of the dynasty to Strata Marcella, but is significantly absent from Meurig's charter to Haughmond, for which see Pryce, *op. cit.*, no. 4.

¹⁶ Jones, Thomas *op. cit.*, pp. 188–89, Jones, Thomas (ed.) *Brut y Tywysogyon . . . Peniarth MS 20 Version*, Cardiff (1952), p. 83. Both texts have Llywelyn seizing Gwenwynwyn's lands before embarking on his Ceredigion campaign.

¹⁷ Jones, Thomas '*Cronica de Wallia . . .*' p. 33 has the following sequence: Gwenwynwyn is seized (by John) at Shrewsbury [i.e. on 8th October]; about Michaelmas Llywelyn gathers a large army and subsequently campaigns against Maelgwn ap Rhys in Ceredigion; Llywelyn takes hostages in Ceredigion; on his return Llywelyn takes possession of Gwenwynwyn's lands and castles.

¹⁸ See Stephenson 'Most Powerful Persons . . .', pp. 26–8.

¹⁹ Lloyd, J. E. *op. cit.*, p. 621.

²⁰ *Ibid.*

²¹ I am grateful to Dr Rhian Andrews for her helpful comments on early drafts of this article.

AN ENGLISH INCURSION INTO BRECONSHIRE – THE CAMDENS

Introduction

In 2004 Dr John Davies delivered the Sir John Lloyd Memorial Lecture. He took as his theme The Landed Families of Breconshire comparing changes in land ownership during the 19th and early 20th centuries of the largest estates in the county.¹ The database used for this analysis was the Return of Owners of Land 1872–73.² This was essentially an Inland Revenue exercise which categorised all owners of land of one acre and upwards in each county. It was an approximation of acreage, as it did not for example include woodland or common land, and was later tidied up by Bateman.³

For purposes of comparison however, it will suffice. Within Breconshire some 1,219 individuals found themselves in the happy position of being analysed, as owning more than an acre and were documented, as opposed to 1,195 owning land in the county of less than an acre who were merely listed.⁴ The information thus gathered was disseminated in 1876 to a receptive audience via the columns of the *Brecon County Times*.⁵ Some 42% of the land area of Breconshire was estimated to have been occupied by estates over 3,000 acres, which was close to the Welsh average.⁶

A summary of the statistics relating to the largest landowners

<i>Landlord</i>	<i>Place of Residence</i>	<i>Acreage</i>	<i>Rental £</i>
Sir J. R. Bailey	Crickhowell	21,979	19,367
Miss Clara Thomas	Builth	8,910	2,731
W.E.Powell	Cardigan	8,055	290
Lord Tredegar	Newport	7,362	6,280
Marquess Camden	Kent	6,430	3,470
Hy Williams	Penpont	6,329	4,099
Edward Davies	Builth	4,635	1,706
Mrs Gwynne Holford	Buckland	4,043	6,082
Duke of Beaufort	Llangattock	4,019	3,625
J. P. W. G. Holford	Buckland	3,698	3,997

The anomaly in the above list is the Marquess Camden.⁷ The other landowners are registered as being resident either in Breconshire – Bailey at Glanusk and Thomas at Llwynmadog or in Wales with Tredegar at Tredegar Park and Powell at Nanteos.

Camden's base was at Bayham Hall, Lamberhurst, Kent, a small town of 2,000 straddling the Kent – Sussex border some eight miles south of Tunbridge Wells. His Breconshire estates although significant, were not as important as his holdings in Kent and Sussex which amounted in that same year to Sussex 3,755 acres with a rental of £3,073 and 7,214 acres in Kent producing £9,836 a year.⁸

As John Davies has pointed out, Camden was not alone in owning larger estates outside Breconshire. Tredegar possessed 25,229 acres in Monmouthshire with a rental of £88,475, and in the same county Beaufort held 27,299 acres and rental of £24,582, and Bailey 4,078 acres and rental £6,432.⁹ The return on Camden's capital in Breconshire was low compared to Tredegar and the Holfords, mainly as a result of his scattered holdings in the west of the county. The average rental of land in the county being 14s (70p) an acre in 1876.¹⁰ Two of his more productive holdings however were in the town of Brecon itself, and it is indicative of his position in Brecon society that Kelly's *Directory* of 1883 in its description of Brecon town commented, 'Lord Tredegar who is lord of the manor and the Marquess Camden are the principal landowners'. Tredegar however was on a different plane politically to Camden in Breconshire, given the family's dominance of county and borough seats over the previous century.¹¹

The Pratt Family – 1

At the time of the New Domesday Book the 4th Marquess was John Charles Pratt aged 2. He was the son of the 3rd Marquess, also John Charles Pratt, who died of an apoplectic fit in 1872 and Lady Clementine Churchill, daughter of the 6th Duke of Marlborough.¹² The male succession had just been maintained. Two sons were stillborn in 1868 and 1869, and a daughter Lady Clementine Pratt was born in August 1870. The 3rd Marquess died on the 4 May 1872, and the 4th Marquess was born on the 9 February 1873, so it was a close run thing.¹³

The Pratts' origins lay in Devonshire, but their estate at Careswell Priory was lost by Richard Pratt in the Civil Wars. As a prominent Royalist he was forced to dispose of his paternal inheritance. Two generations later however, the fortunes of the family appear to have been greatly restored, with his grandson Sir John Pratt eventually becoming Lord Chief Justice.¹⁴ This Sir John (1657–1724) established the Pratts' status financially, politically, and socially in England. He married twice. His first wife was Elizabeth, daughter of the Reverend Henry Gregory, Rector of Middleton Stoney in Oxfordshire. There were nine children of this marriage, five sons of whom only two John and Edward survived

ISSUE OF THE SECOND MARRIAGE OF SIR JOHN PRATT AND DESCENDANTS

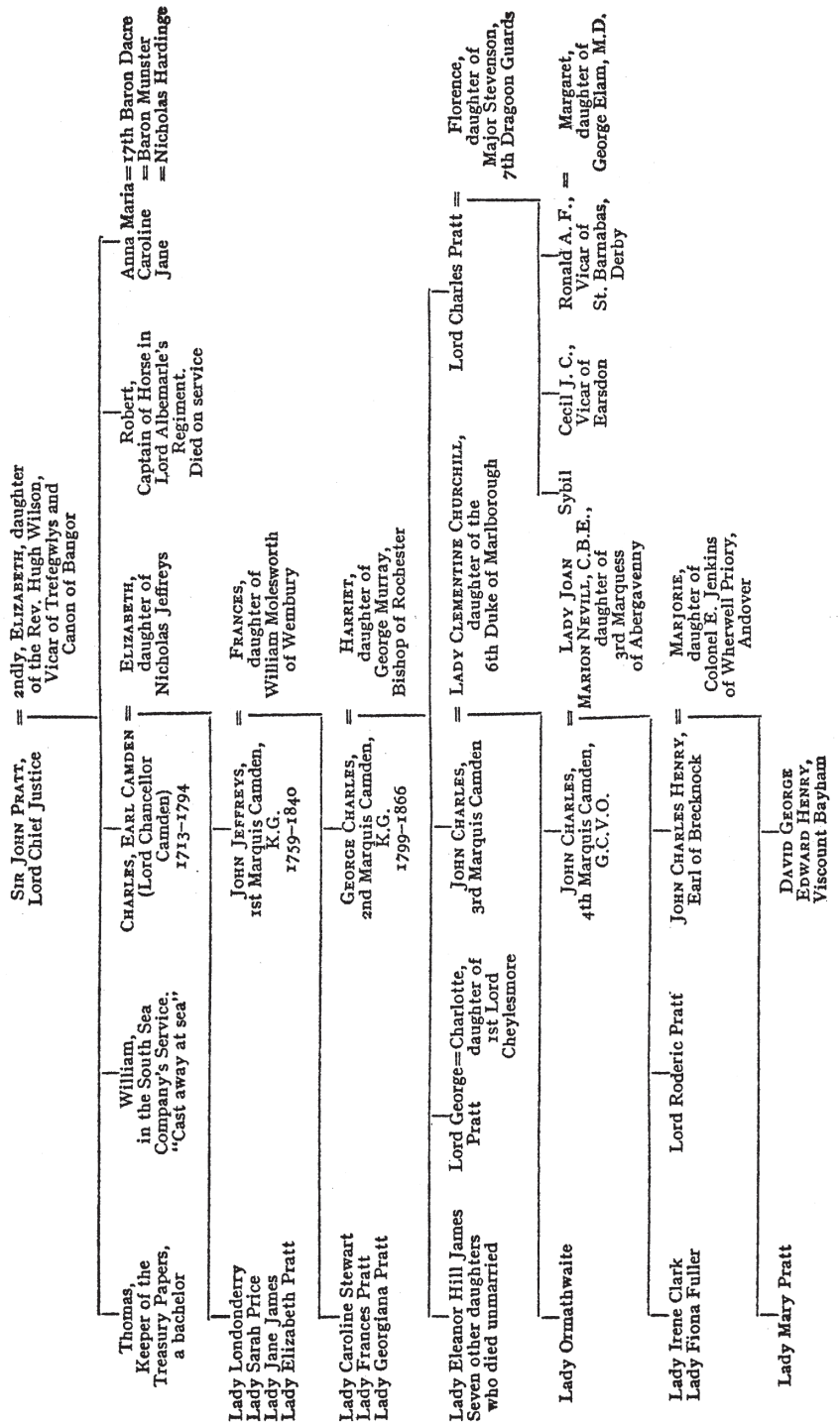


Figure 1

childhood, and four daughters.¹⁵ Mrs Pratt died in 1705 and in 1708 he married another Elizabeth, daughter of another Reverend – Hugh Wilson, Vicar of Trefeglwys, Montgomeryshire. They had eight children, four sons and four daughters. Of the sons of the second marriage, Thomas remained a bachelor, William and Robert died young, and Charles the third son was the future Lord Chancellor Camden. For the second family tree see Figure I

Of the six sons of the Chief Justice who attained manhood, only two left issue. These were John of whom mention has been made, and whose line died out at the death of John the Younger in 1797, and Charles, who was the only one to follow his father into the legal profession.¹⁶ For the purposes of understanding the later economic fortunes of the Pratt family, it is relevant to note that Sir John Pratt became an M.P. in 1700 for Midhurst, Sussex nominated by the Duke of Somerset. In 1699 he purchased Wildernesse Park in Kent, and in 1714 Bayham Abbey in Sussex, these estates would become the principal Camden holdings.¹⁷ With the death of Sir John in 1724, his son John (1690–1770) from his first marriage, M.P. for Sandwich, succeeded to the estates.

This John was also the first of the Pratt family to make a substantial incursion into Breconshire, when in 1718 he married Elizabeth, daughter of Sir Jeffrey Jeffreys who had purchased the Priory estates in 1689.¹⁸ John stood as a Whig candidate for the Brecon borough election in 1723, against the Tory Morgans of Tredegar.¹⁹ Pratt was obviously at this stage closely linked to the Jeffreys family in the political struggle with the Tredegar dynasty for control of the county and borough in the first half of the 18th century. Thomas Morgan kept his seat in the 1727 election, this time defeating John Jeffreys.

The second and more lasting incursion into Breconshire was that of Charles Pratt, later to be the 1st Earl Camden and Lord President of the Council, when in 1749 he married Elizabeth Jeffreys co-heir to the substantial Priory estates²⁰ Jones wrongly states that she is the sole heiress as does Poole. The Pratt family papers and Eeles both confirm that she was co-heir to the Priory estates with her mother Frances Jeffreys. Frances died in 1786. To add to the confusion, the tablet erected in the Priory Church, Brecon states that Elizabeth was the sole heiress, a fact asserted by her son John, the 1st Marquess Camden!

Charles Pratt was born in 1713, and spent most of his childhood at Wildernesse Park. Shortly after the death of his father which occurred when he was 11 years old, he was sent to Eton at which time he was told that his portion as a younger son consisted of little more than would pay for his education, and that when this was completed he would have to carve out his own career.²¹ All the male members of the family, down to the present, were sent to Eton. There, he made a long-lasting friendship with William Pitt, the Elder, which held him in good stead in later years when he became Attorney General in Pitt's government. This was not just a political convenience, and Pratt became Pitt's executor when

he died in 1778.²² Charles moved on from Eton to Kings College, Cambridge, becoming a Fellow in 1734, and then a barrister at the Middle Temple in 1738.

He had met his future wife at his step-brother's home at Wildernesse, and at first made little headway in his courtship. His future mother-in-law and co-heir to the Priory estates, Frances Jeffreys disapproved of the proposed match from the start on account of Mr Pratt's relative poverty. Charles was not having a great deal of success on the legal circuit, but had acquired some limited income with the stewardship of the manors of Comb, Monkston, St James Priory, and Lampford Courtney in the counties of Southampton, Wiltshire, and Devon.²³

Frances quite obviously thought he was after the fortune which would devolve upon her daughter and tried to stop the match but Charles was persistent. His letters to Elizabeth between 1745-9 comment that his relative poverty may prevent them from marrying, and suggesting that her mother re-marry to settle her wavering disposition!²⁴ Fortunately he soon won Elizabeth to his side,²⁵ and even her mother in letters to him in 1749 expressed her favourable opinion.²⁶ The marriage was considered to have been an extremely happy one.²⁷

After his marriage he took up residence at 56 Lincoln's Inn Fields, which he occupied until 1758, then moving to number 34. This remained his town house until 1775 when he moved further west to New Burlington Street. Charles did not become a resident of Brecon; the Camdens remained regular visitors to their Welsh estates usually on triennial visitations but they let out the Priory to Breconshire county families. Indeed, a scheme for letting out the Priory was written in 1834 for the guidance of his agent.²⁸ From 1793 Mr Jeffrey Wilkins was tenant, and later Thomas Wood, incidentally Earl Camden's son-in-law, for much of that period. William de Winton rented the building in the 1850s (29)

In his professional life, Charles rose in government service becoming M.P. for Downton in Wiltshire in 1754, Attorney General in 1757,³⁰ and he was created Lord Camden in 1765, Baron Camden of Camden Place in Kent. (This was a house at Chislehurst, he had purchased a few years earlier which at one time had been the residence of William Camden the historian from whom it received its name).³¹

He was Lord High Chancellor in 1766 and Lord President of the Council from 1782 until his death in 1794. He was created Earl of Camden and Viscount Bayham in 1786, an honour which he considered a bribe, as politically he had lost influence, but which he accepted, as it pleased his children. He was also granted the Freedom of the cities of London (1764), Dublin (1764) and Bristol (1782)³² Campbell in his summary notes 'Among all the Chancellors whose lives I have written, or who are yet in prospect before me, there is no one whose virtues have been more highly estimated than Lord Camden's.'³³ His portrait by Sir Joshua Reynolds hangs in the National Portrait Gallery. He took as the family motto *judicium parium aut lex terrae* (the judgement of our peers or the laws of the land).³⁴



Plate 1 Charles Pratt, 1st Earl Camden

Reproduced courtesy of the National Portrait Gallery

Prices and Jeffreys

It will be helpful at this stage to establish the foundations of the Breconshire wealth, with an analysis of the Price and Jeffreys families from whom it originated. Using Theophilus Jones³⁵ account of the Prices from the sixteenth century and the Jeffreys of the Priory, Abercynrig, and Llywel from the seventeenth century the various family trees pose a number of apparent non-sequiters. They describe the families who were prominent in Breconshire society during the sixteenth to the eighteenth centuries, and who were responsible for the fluctuations in the Priory fortunes. An investigation of these worthies, illustrate their political and financial standing both in Brecon and London.

Sir John Pryse M.P. for the county of Brecon from 1547–52 was the foundation. ‘Sir John who is supposed to have died about 1554–8, according to Theophilus Jones, was a great favourite at court and is said to have composed the petition to Henry VIII which resulted in the complete union of Wales with England . . . on the dissolution of religious houses. Sir John was granted after 1537 the Priory of Benedictus in the Town of Brecon then valued at £112 4s 2d.³⁶ Poole states the date of his death as 1573.³⁷ By Sir John’s will the Hereford possession of St. Guthlac was left to his eldest son Gregory, but the Priory and Breconshire estates to his second son Richard M.P. for Brecon in 1571 who died without issue in 1587.³⁸

His eldest son Gregory by Joan daughter of John Williams of Southwark, married Mary daughter of Humphrey Coningsby of Hampton Court, and had issue Thomas and Margaret who married Jeffrey Jeffreys and brought with her the Priory to that family.³⁹ In the Glanusk edition it is stated wrongly ‘Jeffrey Jeffreys who acquired the Priory estate by his marriage with a daughter of Thomas Price.’⁴⁰ Jeffrey’s father John, had purchased Abercynrig. There is no indication as to when Sir Thomas, died, as presumably the estates would have passed to his sons, as he had two, the second of which was Herbert who died in 1678. Both Thomas in 1614, and Herbert in 1645 are cited as owners of the Priory.⁴¹ Of Jeffrey Jeffreys there is no further information, other than that of his marriage.

Colonel John Jeffreys was the son and heir of Jeffrey Jeffreys. He was M.P. for Breconshire in 1661–2, and for the borough from 1679–81, and 1685–7. He died in 1688. He had several children, but he survived them all except his daughter Dorothy who married Thomas Flower, an Irish nobleman, their son succeeding as Baron Castledurnow.⁴² She later sold the Priory estates to Sir Jeffrey Jeffreys of Llywel her kinsman, in 1689. She presumably did not wish the estates to remain in her own family for her son. This is the zenith in the fortunes to be inherited by Charles Pratt from the Jeffreys estates.⁴³ Sir Jeffrey Jeffreys was the third son of Watkin Jeffreys of Bailea, Llywel. He was educated and adopted

by his uncle Alderman John Jeffreys of London. This uncle made a fortune as a merchant in the metropolis, and received a grant from the Crown of the manor of Cantelow, otherwise Kentish town. Being unmarried he brought up his nephews, and shaped their careers, and they in turn made their own fortunes.

Sir Jeffrey became a merchant of 'great fortune, rank, and quality' in London, and an Alderman of the city. He was Sheriff of London in 1699, and a candidate for the office of Lord Mayor in 1709, the year of his death.⁴⁴ Sir Jeffrey left a family of three sons and five daughters. Of these Jones states that Edward Jeffreys, the eldest son lived from 1680–1740, and was M.P. for Marlborough from 1702–05, and for Brecon borough from 1709–13. There is no record of any legal issue. There is some confusion again here. The eldest son of the family is Edward, but the second son Nicholas is also described as Edward Nicholas who in 1741 was proprietor of the Priory House with John Wilkins as tenant.⁴⁵ So, we have to assume that both sons were called Edward! Poole records that Edward was one of the first subscribing members to the Breconshire Agricultural Society in 1755 but the date of his death is unknown.⁴⁶ (Elizabeth the fifth daughter, incidentally married the John Pratt mentioned previously who was Charles Pratt's step-brother). Nicholas became the heir of his father, and had three children.

Of these, Jeffrey died without issue in 1768, and Maria remained single. Elizabeth of course married Charles Pratt. Jones comments that in 1749 Elizabeth was the heiress to the Priory estates,⁴⁷ but why is there no discussion of Jeffrey who in that year must have been the heir in the male descent. There is no comment on this in the Pratt papers, and one must assume that Nicholas had decided for various reasons on how the succession should be managed. There is nothing either in the wills of the Jeffreys family to rebut this conclusion.⁴⁸

The Estates

Thus Charles Pratt succeeded to a landed fortune, through the vagaries of death, infertility, and fortunate inheritance on both sides of the family. Breconshire was not alone in this, as Geraint Jenkins comments 'other counties were also stricken by the prevailing propensity to biological failure'.⁴⁹ The property was considerable, and Edward Thomas of Margam in surveying the estates in 1779–80 showed, in his maps, that they amounted to over 6,600 acres. The land was spread throughout the county but materially the most important sections were to the south and east of Mynydd y Grug common around the Priory itself (as shown in Plate 2). Land in the town itself, between the Priory and the Watton is described in Plate 3.⁵⁰ The details of tenancy of the two Brecon portions are attached as Appendix 1 and 2 respectively.

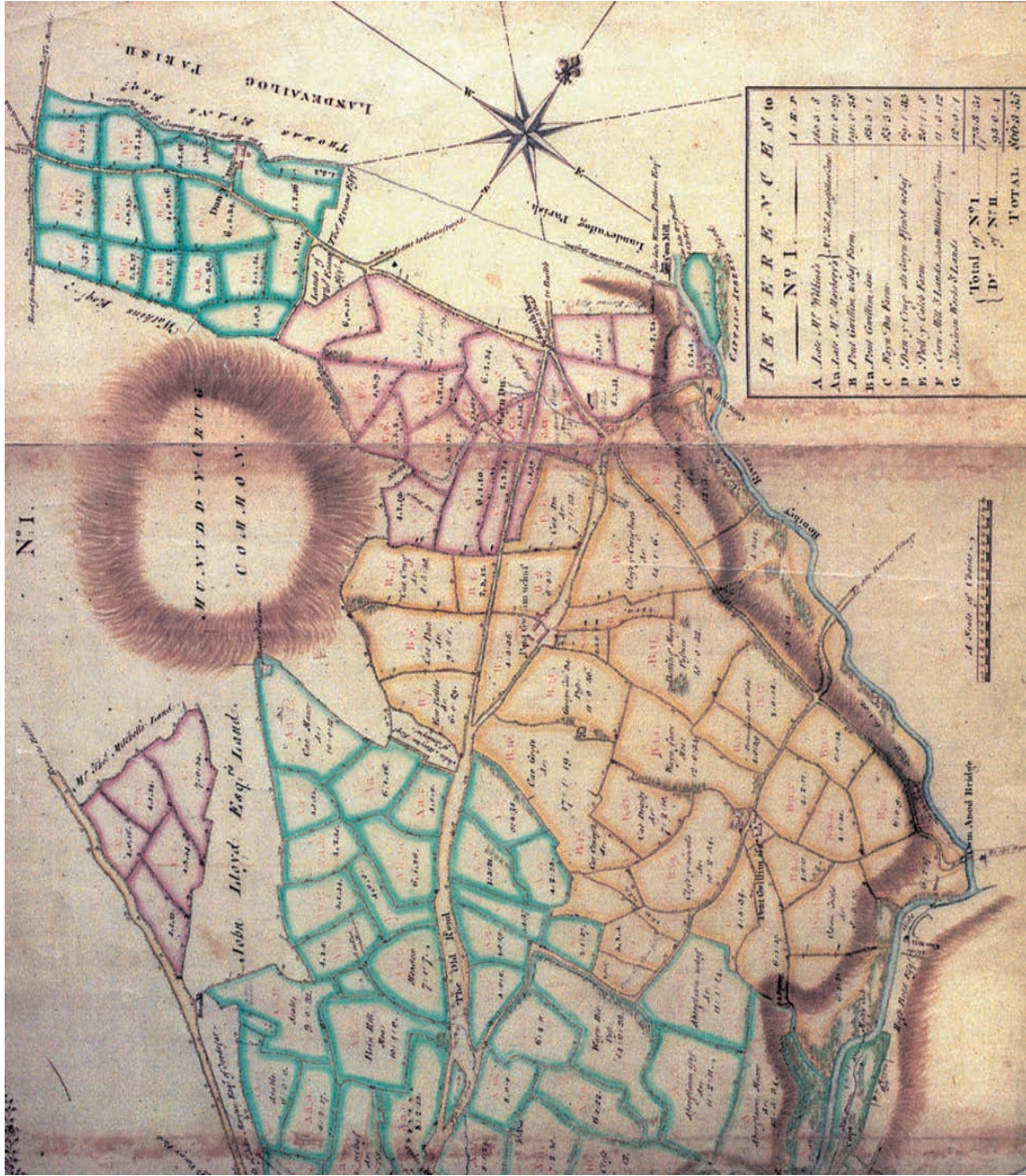


Plate 2 Camden estates, 1779–80 by kind permission of the Centre for Kentish Studies, Maidstone



Plate 3 Camden holdings in Brecon town, 1779-80; by kind permission of the Centre for Kentish Studies, Maidstone

The landed estates were extended again in 1786 by the death of Charles' mother-in-law Frances Jeffreys.⁵¹ His wife Elizabeth had died in 1779. Frances and Charles had never had a good relationship, even though she had reluctantly agreed to his marriage, and it is ironic that Charles as a good lawyer had made himself her sole executor!⁵² He obtained a commission of lunacy, on the grounds that she had died insane, to administer the estate as he thought fit.⁵³ Correspondence between his son-in-law Sir Walter James, and himself showed some of the family's feelings, that he had vested the land to the material benefit of his own family. James, thinking of the future of his own family in his will of 1829, 'desired of his family to destroy all of his correspondence because of its scurrilous content to his father-in-law'.⁵⁴ Besides some property in Breconshire, the real bonus lay in Frances's possession of a great deal of land in Kentish Town, some 300 acres in extent. This, Charles leased out for the building of 1,400 houses, which formed the nucleus of Camden Town which took its name about the end of the nineteenth century from the Marquess Camden, who held the manor of Cantelow within which it stands.

Sussex and Kent

For an overall assessment of the Camden estates, we have to take into account what the Pratts considered their home base at Bayham Abbey, outside Tunbridge Wells in Sussex and Wildernesse Park, near Sevenoaks in Kent. Bayham Abbey was originally a Premonstratensian religious house suppressed in 1526 and it remained a crown property until Elizabeth 1 granted it to Lord Montague. It passed through a number of hands until in 1714 it was sold to Sir John Pratt, Charles's father. On Sir John's death in 1724 it passed to John Pratt, the eldest surviving son of the first marriage, whom we have noted above.⁵⁵

John Pratt died in 1770, but had in about 1740 passed it to his son, also John Pratt, who died in 1797 without heirs. He also had a daughter who died in 1807. In 1797 the estate passed to Thomas Pratt, the eldest son of Sir John Pratt's second marriage, (and Charles's brother), who was then over eighty. On his death it passed to John Jeffreys, Charles's son and heir. John had always considered himself the ultimate heir of his uncle, more so on account of Thomas Pratt's feeble health and incapacity to manage Bayham.⁵⁶

Wildernesse Park dates from the fifteenth century and was purchased by Sir John Pratt again about 1700, and passed to his son John Pratt. It was rebuilt as a stately mansion in the 1750s. It passed to his son John in 1770, who when he realised that he would probably have no children of his own gave it to Sir Charles Pratt and his family. This was just after the marriage of John Jeffreys to Frances Molesworth and they lived there until 1805 when Bayham Abbey came into their possession. Lord Camden later sold Wildernesse to Lord Hillingdon in 1886.⁵⁷

The Pratt Family – 2

Charles Pratt and his successors had therefore by 1805 come into the possession of some 18,000 acres of land in Breconshire, Sussex, Kent, Suffolk, Middlesex, London, and Oxford. Charles and Elizabeth had one son and four daughters, who all married into English and Irish gentry families. There was never a suggestion that links with Breconshire through marriage should be considered.

John Pratt who succeeded to the Earldom in 1794, and assumed the additional surname of Jeffreys in 1799. He married Frances Molesworth⁵⁸ after a three weeks courtship in 1786, daughter of William Molesworth of Wembury, Devon and she brought to the estates, lands in Devon and Cornwall. His wife died in 1829, and they had one son and three daughters. Frances, Earl Camden's eldest daughter (1750–1833), married in 1775, Robert, Earl and Marquis of Londonderry, by whom she had one son and seven daughters. She was his second wife, and the great great grandmother of Winston Churchill.⁵⁹ The descent of the future Prime Minister belonging to either her son or seven daughters!

1st Marquess Camden

John Jeffreys Pratt succeeded to the family estates in 1794. Politically he had remained as M.P. for Bath, being re-elected in 1789 and as Recorder for Bath, following in the footsteps of his father.⁶⁰ He was Lord Lieutenant of Ireland from 1795–8, and Secretary for War and Colonies from 1804–5. He was President of the Council from 1805–6, and 1807–12. In recognition presumably of his status, and as a graduate he was elected Chancellor of the University of Cambridge in 1834.⁶¹ He resigned from the Council in 1812 and was made Marquess Camden and Earl of Brecknock on his resignation. The title of Earl of Brecknock had been instituted by Charles II in 1678 and taken by the Earl of Ormonde. It died out with the death of the 14th Earl in 1758, and was resurrected for Camden's Welsh connections.⁶² The splendour of his Marquessate is reflected in his portrait which hangs in the Brecon Museum.

As John Davies has commented, the structure of land ownership in the county was always in a state of flux and the Camdens were no different buying, selling, and exchanging property to their presumed benefit.⁶³ Pratt greatly enhanced his estates in Sussex and Kent by purchase. Although based a considerable distance from Brecon, they maintained an active interest in the county, not least financially, through their agents. These ranged from John Jeffreys in 1780, through William Tanner in 1830, Hugh Jones in 1843, Lewis Williams in 1906, J. H. Forrester Addie in 1919, and finally Ralph Woosnam up to the end in 1946. Transactions undertaken during the 1st Marquess's tenure included:

1799 – 2 houses and gardens bought from Sir Charles Morgan; 1804 – Land sold to the Ordnance Department for the erection of an armoury; 1806 – premises in the Priory bought from Charles Howel;⁶⁴ 1811 – an exchange with Sir Charles Morgan whereby Camden gave a house near the Usk Bridge in the occupation of Mary Halsey; premises adjoining used as a Grand Room for the local militia; and a house in the occupation of Edward Jones and others. Morgan gave a field in the Watton; a cottage and two tenements near the Priory; and a field at Waun Dan-y-Crug.⁶⁵ 1812 – Malthouse, Maltkin, yard and garden bought from Sir John Turner; 1812 – Leather mill and garden in St. John bought from Howell Maund; and 1814 – Close and premises called the Kennell Field bought from David Jones.

In 1840 the Marquess died, and the opportunity arose in November of that year to assess his worth. In the statement of property for probate the total value of his assets came to £36,165 17 0d, which might have been realised if they had been sold. It is useful to note the spread of income, and the place of Breconshire in this reckoning.

	£	s	d
Cash in the House	nil		
Cash at the Banker (Gosling)	2,031	15	4
Do (Gosling separate account)	206	15	11
Furniture plate linen China Books pictures	10,173	10	6
Wine at Wildernesse Park at the Grove near Wildernesse Park and at Belgrave Square as valued by Mr. Saunders of Seven Oaks 2 Nov. 1840			
Furniture and Effects at Bayham Abbey as valued by Mr. Hart of Tunbridge Wells 10 Nov. 1840			
Furniture and Effects at Brecknock Priory as estimated by Mr. Roper 19 Nov. 1840	670	14	6
Valuation of Farming Stock and Crops at Wildernesse Park			
Wildernesse Park	1,755		
Deduct for Heriots	300		
Carriages and Horses (say)	150	0	0
Rent and Arrears of Rent from Bayham Estate to Michaelmas	5,809	8	11
Arrears of Underwood and Timber at Bayham	2,903	7	0
Rent and Arrears of Rent from the Wildernesse Estate to Michaelmas	995	19	4
The like for the Brecon Estate	4,286	19	9
Rent and Arrears of Rent of the Camden Town and London Estates to Michaelmas	3,292	0	0
Mortgage and Interest	208	0	0
Bond Notes and Interest	1,074	15	9

68

Brycheiniog

Turnpike Bond and Interest	52	10	0
5 Brecon Canal Shares and 5 Brecon Canal Bonds	1,000	0	0
Belgrave Square House at Rack Rent	nil		
Arrears of Salary from the Exchequer	675	0	0
Mr. Roper about	900	0	0
Total	£36,165	17	0 ⁶⁶

Having regard to this total, it is interesting to compare the figure stated in a second tablet in the Priory Church, Brecon:

Sacred to the memory of the Right Honourable John Jeffreys Pratt, Marquis Camden K.G. Who died October 8 1840 aged 81 years. During a long life passed in the service of the public and in the highest offices of the state he contributed by voluntary donations towards the exigencies of his country £366,116 14 3. This tablet to record his patriotism and virtues is erected by his affectionate niece Lady Caroline Wood. A good name is rather to be chosen than great riches.

This is a considerable sum, to be suggested as his stated worth in 1840, but the key lay in the Camden family's tellership of the Exchequer which had commenced in 1766 and had risen in value to about £24,00 annually in 1808. 'The 1st Marquis had voluntarily relinquished part of this income from 1798, and in 1817, Castlereagh informed Parliament that the Marquis, his uncle, would take only a salary of £2,500 p.a. For his part in the Marquis Camden's Tellership Act of 1819 he received numerous public accolades for this munificent gesture'.⁶⁷

1840–1893

This period covers the stewardship of three Marquesses. George Charles Pratt, 2nd Marquess 1799–1866; John Charles Pratt 3rd Marquess 1840–1872; and John Charles Pratt 4th Marquess 1872–1943.⁶⁸ None of these gentlemen married into Breconshire society, and contented themselves with English matches. They also did not follow in the political steps of their predecessors. The 3rd Marquess was briefly M.P. for Brecon Borough in 1866, elected unopposed after the death of John Lloyd Vaughan Watkins of Penoyre, but had to give up that seat on his elevation to the Lords, on the death of his father, who had two sons and eight daughters. The death came as a surprise to his son, who was on his wedding tour at the time! In the bye-election that followed, Howell Gwyn of the Duffryn, Neath, Conservative, beat Lord Almeric Spencer Churchill, brother of the Marchioness Camden, by 128 to 102 votes.⁶⁹

The Marquesses' interests were in the maintenance of their estates, and minor political work in Kent and Sussex. What is noteworthy is the unchanging acreage which they enjoyed. The approximately 18,000 acres at the end of the eighteenth century was still the total calculated in 1935, although the rent returns, were of a lower value due to the better properties having been sold off. The Welsh estate rental book for 1858 shows a slight increase from 1840, in rents received of £4,761.0.8 Examples include: Priory House £40 and meadow land £15 to de Winton Esq.; Cae Prior £20 to Evan Williams; Factory Garden £24 to Price and Edwards; Cottage £3 to Widow Parry.⁷⁰

The rents however were just the gross and not the net receipts. Workmens' wages and bills for repairs came to £645.15.11. Michael Jenkins was paid £4.4.0 for felling and timber, and David Edwards £11.8.6 for slates. Sales of property included the 4a.2r.34p released to H M Ordnance in 1843, this was land next to and including the barracks which effectively trebled the land area for the army.⁷¹ In that same year his agent wrote to William Roper who controlled the Bayham estates, on the terrible state of tenants' houses and buildings in Breconshire. An address from such tenants to Lord Camden soon followed thanking him for improvements made.⁷² Land would possibly also be made available to the railway; Camden wrote in 1845 to the Welsh Midland Railway requesting tracings of their alternative routes which were to traverse his property.⁷³ Unfortunately the Welsh Midland scheme appeared before Parliament in 1846 and failed on Standing Orders. After that it disappeared in the financial troubles of 1847 and no more was heard of it.⁷⁴ A small parcel of land – 3a.0r.24p. was sold bordering Llandeilo Fan for the proposed Defynnog railway in 1860.⁷⁵

Land was not available however for house building, and an editorial in the *Brecon County Times* of August, 1868 commented, 'we look almost in vain for anything like house building in Brecon . . . we know for a fact that this summer there have been numerous enquiries after houses in the neighbourhood and there were none to be had . . . The majority of such land is held by Lord Tredegar and the Marquis Camden who are unwilling and perhaps to a certain extent unable to part with it . . . the ground rent is much too high, and thus an effectual barrier is raised against enterprise.'⁷⁶

Land sales had been made however for institutions; the Brecon Memorial Independent College in Camden Road purchasing 4½ acres in August 1868. The trustees on behalf of the College were Thomas John Davies and Thomas Williams.⁷⁷ Land was also made available to the railway companies and in March 1871 a joint station was opened called Free Street.

However the message in the *Brecon County Times*, must have struck a chord, for during a visit by the Marquess and his wife in 1869, permission was granted for the first houses to be built in Camden Road for many centuries. The Marchioness gained the goodwill of other inhabitants of the town, when she gave

a cheque for £5 to the inmates of the Workhouse for a treat – roast beef and plum pudding, as much beer as was good for them, and tobacco and snuff.⁷⁸ Her affection for the people of Brecon, and their grateful response continued through the years and on the news of her death at Villa Clementine in Cannes, the town bells tolled their tribute.⁷⁹

On a later visit in 1883, concern was expressed in an editorial in the *Brecon County Times*, that the old Priory House should be put into a good state of repair, so that the young Marquess could visit and meet his tenantry on a more regular basis, and develop an ‘affection’ for the neighbourhood. These comments were made when the Marchioness and her second husband Captain Philip Green, had decided to stay with Mr Caulfield and Lady Alan S. Churchill at Peterstone Court. During the visit they did visit Defynnog Show, but the Camdens never stayed at Priory House, preferring the hospitality of relations or of the Castle Hotel.⁸⁰

A more accurate statement of the Camden’s overall financial position came in ‘the Estate account for Bayham, Portions (which included Wilderness Park and other smaller properties) Brecon, and London from 1877-93’. For the year 1885 the audit for taxation purposes showed in receipts and payments, a total favourable balance of £2,325, the sections for Bayham and Camden Town including living expenses for the family, and any property transactions.⁸¹

The Brecon contribution to balances, declined in this period from £2,665 in 1877, to £1,676 in 1885 and £1,680 in 1892, due principally to a fall in agricultural prices and rents. This was in contrast to the overall Camden estates where the balance of £4,104 on 1877, which had fallen to £2,325 in 1885, had recovered by 1892 to £4,473. This latter figure can partly be explained by the receipts from 1890 when the Marquess’s London town house was sold. This was offered for auction by the Estate Trustees in 1889 as a mansion built by the late Mr. Thomas Cubbitt.⁸² To aid these calculations a revised map of the Camden’s Welsh holdings was completed circa 1888, which showed some minor differences from 1779, but still with a scattered portfolio.⁸³

In 1890 the cost of maintaining members of the family, was illustrated by Lady Clementine Pratt’s marriage, she being the sister of the Marquess. In order to provide her with an annuity of £1,660 p.a, the Camden Estate had to invest £55,355 in 3% India Stock. How this was achieved in the light of receipts and payments above is not clarified.⁸⁴ Clementine had received a wedding gift from employees and tenants of the Breconshire estates (marriage to the Hon. Arthur H.J Walsh, eldest son of Lord Ormathwaite.⁸⁵

The Welsh Estate Rental book for 1893 shows rents received as £4,596.2.0d. Principal contributors were the parishes of St John the Evangelist and Fenny Fach – £1,394; parish of St Mary – £427; and Llywel – £1,326. The Brecon and Merthyr Railway paid £175, H O A Maybery £40 for Priory House and Meadow, and David Powell £128 for Court Gilbert farm. Workmens’ wages and

suppliers' costs had to be found, with payments – for example to Williams and Coppage, ironmongers £61.15.7. The Camdens also subscribed to schools which served their estates viz. Llywel £5, Llandefaelog £2.2.0, Cwm Dwr £2, and Penterefelin £1.1.0.⁸⁶ They also contributed £25 to a New Drill Hall for Volunteers and £50 to a new Vicarage house at St Mary, Traiangelas.

Three years after Clementine's wedding, saw another important milestone for the family as it marked the coming of age of the 4th Marquess. Local support was to the fore. The *Brecon County Times* reported:

'On Thursday night in last week a huge bonfire was set alight by Mrs Lewis Williams the Lady Mayoress, in honour of the coming of age of the Marquis of Camden. Unfortunately the night was most unfavourable, the rain literally poured down in sheets and the high wind made it almost impossible to keep a footing, but in spite of the inclement weather, scores of people made their way to the top of the Crug to take part in the rejoicings. Those who did so are not likely to forget the event. On the same night and in honour of the same event a bonfire was also started on Camden Road on Lord Camden's estate by Mr R M Meredith and other of his tenants, the general result was that everyone got a soaking but concurred in their hopes that the career of the Marquis would be a happy and useful one.'⁸⁷ In April the Freedom of the Borough was conferred on the Marquess, an event at which 600 people attended, and in May a grand banquet was held at the Castle Hotel.⁸⁸

The Estate accounts recorded in detail the cost of these celebrations:

Castle Hotel dinner to the tenants, Corporation of Brecon, and subscribers to the presentation – 237 altogether	£	s	d
	232	0	8
Bill for Lord Camden's party	65	9	2
Musicians and lodgings	8	9	9
Wilcockson cigars etc	5	12	6
Poole printing	2	12	6
Phillips – dinner for Fire Brigade, Police etc	7	17	6
Fees police	1	0	0
Gratuities to servants, drivers, station master, guards etc	8	10	0
25 cottage tenants at 10/-	12	10	0
Total	344	2	1

To round off a good year for his tenants, rent remissions for the year of 15% were given. A great deal of the work in carrying out Camden's wishes, and liaising with his tenants was undertaken by his agent Lewis Williams. He had succeeded his father in this position, as his son would succeed him. Williams

served for a number of years as an Alderman on Brecon Town Council, and was indeed Mayor in the significant year of 1893. He died very suddenly at the age of 59 in 1912, while attending to his duties at the Camden estate rent audit.⁸⁹ His reward in financial terms in 1893 was – a salary of £100, travelling expenses of £47.16.8, free rent of stable at £1, and stamps and stationery £11.10.4. He lived in Priory Cottage, rent free. Lewis is recorded in Kelly's *Directory* for 1906, also, as agent for Capt. D. Hughes Morgan J.P. St Mary St. Brecon

1894–1946

This period covers the stewardships of two Marquesses, John Charles Henry Pratt, 5th Marquess 1899–1983, and David George Edward Henry Pratt, 6th Marquess born in 1930. The Welsh Estate Rental Book for 1912 showed in real terms a decline in revenue. Rents received were £4,875.4.1d, with again the main contributors being St John and Fennyfach £1,490; St Mary £543; and Llywel £1,367. Contributions were also received from the parishes of Modrydd, Llanfrynach, Cantref, Trallong, Llandaelog Fach, Llanfihangel Fechan, Merthyr Cynog, and Llandeilo Fan.⁹⁰

Captain D Hughes Morgan was paying £22 for Camden Villa; J A Jebb £38 for Glyngarth, Camden Road and adjacent land; Margaret Kettle £120.10 for Cae Prior and land; William Dowdswell £16 for the garden between Camden Road and the Railway; Lucy P Maybery £60 for Priory House and Meadow; and David T Jeffreys £266 for Camden Farm in Llywel Parish. The cost of the Audit dinner for Brecon and Trecastle was £38.2.8d

The next decade witnessed a series of sales among the great estates. As Thompson comments 'The costs of estate management and maintenance increased as a result of the war, and the smaller net incomes from land simply confirmed that the low return in relation to capital value imposed a price on landownership which was no longer balanced by social advantages'.⁹¹ Estate sales included in 1915 the Duke of Beaufort's Breconshire estates 38 lots; 1918 Lord Glanusk, Peterstone and Trebinshwn 34 lots; 1919 Buckland estate 41 lots; and 1920 Lord Glanusk Crickhowell estate 55 lots.⁹²

Camden was not divorced from this process, being both a buyer and seller. From the sale of Tredegar estates of 199 lots, on 29th November 1915 which realised £104,788.12.0), he was among a number of local purchasers' buying lots 15 and 162 for £525; while J C Lloyd purchased 1 lot for £1,000; W F Parry de Winton 3 lots for £580; Brecon Burial Board 1 lot for £300; and Brecon Gas Co 1 lot for £720.⁹³

Camden, although an absentee landlord visited his Breconshire estates on a regular basis. Unfortunately, the only record available of any detail, to demonstrate this is a diary which he kept on a visit in September, 1917, arriving

on the 10th and using the Castle Hotel, Brecon as his base. The following extracts give a picture of his tenantry at this time:

‘Tuesday, 11th – 12 visits altogether, including

The Priory Mrs Maybery not at home, but saw her daughter Mrs Fowler, also Major H G C Fowler, Mrs Maybery’s son who is in the R.F.C.

The Priory Woollen Factory Mr. J L Williams the tenant, explained the working of the machinery

Lower Pontwilliam the largest farm on the estate, saw the tenant Thomas Morgan (unmarried) and his sister. Inspected some of his stock

Received a deputation at the Castle Hotel of the Town Council which consisted of the Mayor Mr Wm Williams, Alderman E A Wright, Alderman D Powell (Deputy Mayor) and Councillor Miss Gwenllian Morgan

Wednesday, 12th – 6 visits altogether, including Cwmfforch Farm, Parish of Merthyr Cynog saw the tenant Albert Williams, also Mrs Williams and her eldest daughter. Family 11 children living 6 sons and 5 daughters, one son serving with the army in France. The eldest daughter when very young, lost her right arm so close to the shoulder, that an artificial arm could not be fitted, but the loss does not prevent her doing any kind of manual work. The girl is capable of such as sewing, knitting etc. Mrs Williams claims her ancestors have been tenants of this farm at least 200 years.

Thursday, 13th 5 visits including The Camden Farm, Trecastle where lunch was provided by the tenant Mr D J Jeffreys and Mrs Jeffreys. Family 2 sons, 2 daughters, both sons are at Shrewsbury School. In pre-railway days this house was ‘The Camden Hotel’ and largely patronised by coaches. After lunch Mr Jeffreys exhibited his Welsh ponies and Hereford cattle.⁹⁴

Urban estates were also being broken up, no less than in agricultural ones, and here the drive to convert property into cash and then into other investments was plainer for all to see. Thompson reports ‘In 1919 the Duke of Bedford sold £2m worth of his Bloomsbury ground rents, Lord Portman 7 acres of Marylebone, Lord Camden parts of Camden Town, and Lord Southampton a part of Euston’.⁹⁵

In Brecon itself, Camden disposed of 41 acres in the Camden Road area, to Margaret Kettle for £4,500, and 4 acres to Mrs Elizabeth Jenkins, widow of Benjamin Jenkins.⁹⁶ In the same parish in 1921 he sold land to the Brecon Infirmary. The purchase price was £450, the value of the property was £950, and Camden treated the difference as a subscription to the War Memorial Fund.⁹⁷ In the preceding year he treated generously with the Brecon Corporation, in the sale of 1,390 sq.yds. for housing, between Maendu St. and Pendre. The price asked was £400, and the price agreed by Camden was £180. Three dwellings on the site being subject to short tenancies.⁹⁸

The District Valuer writing to G. Hyatt Williams, Town Clerk in November, 1919 commented, ‘I would like to call the attention of your Council to the fact

that the Marquis Camden and his representatives have shown sympathetic consideration towards the Council's proposed housing scheme. The terms now provisionally arranged may be considered to be very satisfactory from the purchaser's point of view, and I should be glad if when the matter is completed the Council would be good enough to instruct you to communicate with the Marquis's agent expressing their appreciation, of the very moderate terms upon which he has been willing to place, this site for housing purposes at the disposal of the Borough Council'.

Between 1912 and 1923, Camden sold a high percentage of his Welsh estates, and this is reflected in the rentals received in the latter year. The Welsh Estate Rental book for 1923 shows returns of only £2,188 5 9d, compared with £4,875.4.1 in 1912. Contributions were received from St John and Fennifach of £1,072; St Mary £365; and Llywel £337.⁹⁹ The Railway was paying £175, Mrs Maybery £20 for Priory Meadow, and the Brecon Allotment Society £14.10 for part of field No. 1045.

1933 followed a similar pattern with rentals of £2,164.2.10d. The next decade witnessed the virtual end of Camden influence in Wales, principally again through sales. Examples of gross rentals received between 1930 and 1943, and more importantly for the Marquess of net income paid into his London bank account are:

<i>Year</i>	<i>Rentals</i> £	<i>Net Income</i> £
1930	2,297	1,000
1939	1,833	1,120
1941	1,794	700
1943	1,717	600 ¹⁰⁰

Correspondence between Jeffreys and Powell his rent collectors in Brecon, illustrate the mood of the times. In April 1935, for example 'Jenkins the Builder asks if you will sell him about 2,700 sq.yds of land for building, from a strip of ground that lies between the GWR and Camden Road. You have already sold most of your land adjoining Camden Road, and I see no reason why the rest should not be sold as soon as there is a demand for it for building sites. The price I shall want from Jenkins is £600 per acre and I believe he will be prepared to pay that amount'.¹⁰¹ Jenkins did and the result was four sets of semi detached houses, numbers 54 to 68, built in 1938.

In 1937 almost all of the last remnants of the Trecastle estates were sold. These were marketed as individual lots; Captain Woosnam, the Camden agent advised W.J. Price the Brecon auctioneer in March of that year, 'I cannot help feeling that we might go very near to the prices which I have put in the margin, if

the lots were separate and I am rather doubtful if we should make as much as £4,500 if we sold the property as one estate'. The advice was followed and five lots including the Black Horse Inn and the Three Horseshoes Inn realised £4,820.¹⁰²

The last recorded entry for the Camden estates in Breconshire, lies in the Rentals file from 1925–46. In the latter year the rental had a temporary resurgence due to post war prices recording £1,833.14.7. Contributions were received from the parishes of St John, St Mary, Cantreff, Llandefaelog Fach, Llanfihangel, Merthyr Cynog, Llywel, and Llandeilo Fan. A full list is set out as Appendix 3.¹⁰³

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The records held at The Centre for Kentish Studies and Powys Archives with regard to the Welsh estates of the Camden family, terminate in 1946. The present Marquess confirms that although some family papers are still awaiting transfer to the archives, they are relevant only to the Bayham estate.¹⁰⁴ Bayham itself was sold in the 1980s and the present Marquess now lives in Andover.

1946 therefore marks the end of the 200 year involvement of the Pratt family in Breconshire. Little remains to remind us of their presence. On the east side of Brecon stand Camden Road, and Camden Crescent. The Camden Arms for long registered in the Watton, has been re-named Chwarae Teg presumably for marketing purposes. A portrait of the 1st Marquess hangs in military splendour in Brecon Museum, and that is all. What survives however, and will remain is the name of Camden, in the deeds of a host of properties in Breconshire including as it does in my own, number 49 Camden Road.

A. J. BELL

APPENDIX 1

CAMDEN ESTATES IN BRECONSHIRE 1779–80

	<i>Acres</i>	<i>Roods</i>	<i>Perches</i>
1. Farms – Llediada, Llwyn-Llwyd, Gwar y Felin, Tir y Cwm, in the parish of Merthyr	317	2	14
2. Cwm Arche and Cwm Forch Farms, in the parish of Merthyr	332	0	13
3. Ffrwd Hill Farm, in the parish of Merthyr	220	2	23
4. Gilfach Farms, in the parish of Trallwn	206	2	23
5. Abercray, Cefn Cray, Pen y Wingon, and Llwyn y Cilog Farms in the parish of Llywel	377	1	15
6. Bronnydd Farm in the parish of Llywel	89	2	18
7. Tir y Graig and Llwyn y Meyric Farms, in the parish of Llywel	134	1	37
8. Land south and east of Mynydd y Crug Common	773	3	31
9. Cwm Gwillim Fawr and Cwm Gwillim Fach Farms, in the parish of Llandefaelog	296	2	38
10. Brecon town	93	0	4
11. Venny Fach wood in the parish of St. John	62	2	22
12. Bailey Griffiths and Allt Meredith Farms, in the parish of Llandefaelog	234	2	26
13. Llanfellyt Farm in the parish of Llansantffraed	75	2	5
14. Sundry Farms in the several parishes of Llandefaelog and Merthyr	386	3	37
15. Bryn Sais and Nant Grithin Farms, in the parish of Merthyr	260	3	18

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16. Hendre Bolon and Rhyd y Yolfa Farms, in the parish of Ystradfellty	155	1	10
17. Foes y Bar and Nant y Beinon Farms, in the parish of Llandeilo'r Fan	213	2	23
18. Ffoesddu in the parish of Lywel	62	1	9
19. St.David's, Cantref, and Llanhamlach	316	3	0
20. Sundry Farms of Cwrt Glyn and Cwm Dwr in the parish of Llywel	1038	0	23
21. Sundry Farms in Trecastle	737	1	23
22. Court Gilbert and Gwain y Saison Farms, in the parish of Llanspyddid	183	2	23

(All measurements are in acres, perches, and roods – 40 perches = 1 rood; 4 roods = 1 acre)

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APPENDIX 2

CAMDEN ESTATES IN BRECON 1779–80

8. *Land south and east of Mynydd y Crug Common*

	<i>Acres</i>	<i>Roods</i>	<i>Perches</i>
Mr. Wilkins	180	3	8
Mr. Maybery	121	0	29
Pont Gwillim uchaf farm	191	0	38
Pont Gwillim isaf farm	83	3	1
Waun Du farm	83	3	21
Dan y Crug ac Gwyn Ffrwd uchaf	69	1	33
Pwll y Calch farm	28	1	8
Corn Mill and Lands – John Wilkins	11	3	12
The Iron Works and Lands	12	0	1
Total	773	3	31

10. *Brecon Town*

Lands at the Watton – Thomas Longfellow (is also recorded as the tenant of Priory House)	46	1	26
Lands at the Watton – Walter Jeffreys	18	3	24
Lands at the Watton – Jeffrey Wilkins	6	0	8
Lands at the Watton – John Jones	13	1	0
A Field at the Watton – Samuel Price	2	0	18
Part of a Field at the Watton – Thomas Meredith	0	1	2
House in High St. – Mrs Mary Griffiths, Milliner	0	0	20

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House in High St. Walter Powell, Attorney	0	0	20
The Sun Inn, Wheat St, – Widow Bussey	0	0	8
A House in Wheat St. – John Morgan	0	0	14
A House in Wheat St. – James Lewis, Butcher	0	0	12
A Malt House – John Jones	0	0	6
A House in Wheat St. – Elizabeth Luckington	0	0	3
A House and garden in the Watton – Wm. Williams and John Griffiths	0	0	15
Total	93	0	24

Note 1 perch = 30 sq.yds

APPENDIX 3

BRECONSHIRE ESTATES RENTAL 1946

	£	s	d
<i>Parish of St John</i>			
Mrs Hettie Jones – pasture land at Tairderwen	24	0	0
Thos and Lewis Walters – Upper Pontwilliam	295	0	0
Execs of late D. Jones – Tairderwen Smiths Shop	5	0	0
Reps of late Rees Davies – House and Wheelwrights shop (Camden cottage)	5	0	0
Thos Morgan – Lower Pontwilliam	500	0	0
Reps late John Williams – Priory Mill House/Land	34	0	0
Quarell Sons – land	24	0	0
B.W.A.E.C. – Storage Accommodation	15	0	0
Thos and Lewis Walters – Crug Villa Bldgs/Garden/Land	10	0	0
L.H.Wales – Priory Lodge	30	0	0
John Williams 2 Pendre – Little Meadow	4	10	0
T J Elston 21 High St – Field No 1035	32	10	0
<i>Parish of St Mary</i>			
Mrs Georgina Phillips – 26 Watton	14	0	0
Wm Howcroft – 23 Watton	25	0	0
Ephraim Skyrme – 18 Watton and garden	25	9	7
D J Cross – 15 Watton	21	10	
David Williams Lion Yard – Meadow land	12	0	0
H W Davies – 1 Watton	22	10	8
W Rhodes – 2 Watton	20	16	0
GWR – Land at Camden Road	262	10	0
<i>Parish of Cantreff</i>			
W C Vaughan – Smiths Shop House	6	0	0
<i>Parish of Llandefaelog Fach</i>			
Chas D Davies, Panyglas – Waenyflenddu	6	0	0
J D Bennett, Old Brewery Brecon – Outbuildings to Camden Arms	1	0	0
<i>Parish of Llanfihangel</i>			
John Andrew Jones – Bailey Griffith	100	0	0
<i>Parish of Merthyr Cynog</i>			
Exs of late Mrs Williams – Cwm Ffwrch, Lower Chapel	85	0	0
A E Drinkwater – Cwm Arche, Lower Chapel	139	6	0
Lewis J Rees – Ffryddyl, Merthyr Cynog	90	0	0

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Parish of Llywel

Sarah Watkins, Oakley House, Trecastle – House	8	0	0
G Jones, Bronydd – House	8	0	0
C T Davies – Old Post Office	17	0	0
Vacant – part Manchester House	–		
Beryl Jones, Halfway – Chapel at Halfway	2	5	0

Parish of Llandeilo Fan

P.O. Telegraphs	–		
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Parish of St John

Lemuel Powell – No. 4 Forge	4	5	0
R Watkin – 3	9	2	0
Lewis Williams – 2	4	0	0
Lewis Williams – 1	4	0	0
Mrs Price – 5 Priory Hill and garden	5	0	0
Mrs Lewis – 6	10	0	0
T Watkins – 7	10	0	0
Mrs Mapp – 8	10	0	0
Mrs A J Pattison – 1 Priory Row	12	8	8
A T Hill – 2	12	8	8
Mrs M A Adams – 3	12	8	8
Mrs Weller – 4	12	8	8
Mrs Sheen – 5	11	9	8
David Hill – 6	11	9	8
Mrs E J Cook – 7	11	9	8
Mrs Moat – 8	11	9	8
Mrs B Phillips – 9	12	8	8
Mrs Clara Young – 10	12	8	8
Ex Miss Emily Smith – 11	11	9	8

NOTES

- ¹ *Brycheiniog XXXVI*, 'The Landed Families of Breconshire', p.69–82.
- ² England and Wales Parliamentary Papers 1874, 1871 Census.
- ³ Bateman, J., *The Great Landowners of Great Britain and Ireland*, 1877.
- ⁴ A copy of these statistics is provided in Poole, E. *The Illuminated History and Biography of Brecknockshire 1886*, p. 430–5, and is also available at Powys County Archives. P/X/9/M/7
- ⁵ *Brecon County Times*, 1 and 15 April, 1876.
- ⁶ Howell, D.W., *Land and People in 19C Wales*, p. 21.
- ⁷ Note that the title is Marquess Camden and not the Marquess of Camden. For the holder of a Marquisate or an Earldom to have dispensed with the "of" is not uncommon, but almost invariably denotes that the bearer of the title has retained his surname. Debrett 1905.
- ⁸ Return of Owners of Land Kent and Sussex, 1873.
- ⁹ Return of Owners of Land Monmouthshire, 1873.
- ¹⁰ *Brecon County Times*, 29.7.1876.
- ¹¹ Williams, W.R., *The Parliamentary Representation of the Principality of Wales 1541–1885*. For a more detailed and up to date analysis of parliamentary representation read James, Arnold J. and Thomas, John E., *Union to Reform and Wales at Westminster*, Gomer Press, 1979.
- ¹² *Brecon County Times*, 1.5.1872.
- ¹³ Burke's Peerage, 1872.
- ¹⁴ Kent – Historical, Biographical, and Pictorial, 1907.
- ¹⁵ I am indebted for this information to Eeles, H.J. in his book *Lord Chancellor Camden and His Family*, London 1934, Philip Allen. This is the only published history of part of the Pratt family that I am aware of. The book relates the lives of Sir John Pratt, Lord Chief Justice; his son Charles Pratt, Lord Chief Justice and Lord Chancellor; and his son John Jeffreys Pratt, 1st Marquess Camden, p. 8.
- ¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 28.
- ¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 7.
- ¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 8.
- ¹⁹ Williams, p. 25. Thomas Morgan beat Pratt in the 1723 election, and in 1727 kept his seat defeating John Jeffreys.
- ²⁰ Eeles, p. 27.
- ²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 29.
- ²² *Ibid.*, p. 22.
- ²³ Pratt Papers, Centre for Kentish Studies, Maidstone. U840 C9/1. For a detailed study of the Pratt family, 3,200 items are held at Kent County Hall, deposited there by the Marquess Camden between 1961 and 1978, all bearing the initial reference U840.
- ²⁴ U840 F5.
- ²⁵ U840 C1.
- ²⁶ Eeles p. 39.
- ²⁷ Campbell, Lord John, *Lives of the Lord Chancellors, and Lives of the Chief Justices*, 1868.
- ²⁸ U840 C/11/2–3.
- ²⁹ *An Architectural Study – The Cathedral Church of St. John the Evangelist*. 1994, follows the occupation of the Priory from the 18th to the early 20th century.
- ³⁰ For those interested in an analysis of English law read – *Lord Camden's Contribution to English Law*, Saeed, Khadji-Sultana Shaikh, Ph.D thesis 1968, University of London.
- ³¹ Eeles, p. 81.
- ³² U840 F6/031A/F11.
- ³³ Eeles, p. 187.
- ³⁴ Debrett ,1905, p. 153.

³⁵ Jones, Theophilus, *A History of Brecknockshire*, Glanusk, Vol. IV.

³⁶ Poole, p. 313.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 314.

³⁸ An Architectural Study, p.37. Williams, Glamor. In *Brycheiniog XXXI*, p. 49–61 records information as to the will of Sir John Price from Morgan, F.C. NLWLJ ix p. 255–61. He notes that Sir John was born in 1502 and died in October 1555, leaving issue five sons and five daughters.

³⁹ Jones, p. 286.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 110.

⁴¹ An Architectural Study, p. 37.

⁴² Jones, p. 296.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, p. 280.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 282.

⁴⁵ An Architectural Study, p. 38. Interesting to note that the Buck print of the Priory describing Nicholas Jeffreys as owner was published in 1741, immediately after his brother's death.

⁴⁶ Poole, p. 267.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 480.

⁴⁸ U840 T.188.

⁴⁹ Jenkins, Geraint, *The Foundations of Modern Wales*, p. 264.

⁵⁰ U840 EW22. Powys Archives has a CD Rom setting out the maps of the 22 separate properties. Permission to use these for copying purposes is required from the Centre for Kentish Studies.

⁵¹ U840 T.188/13.

⁵² *The Reader's Digest* in 2002 had categorized the surname Pratt as synonymous with 'cunning or astute'. Hanks and Hodge, *A Dictionary of Surnames* – are more direct and states Pratt – nickname for a clever trickster from OE proett trick.

⁵³ U840 C44.

⁵⁴ U840 T.255.

⁵⁵ U840 EB50.

⁵⁶ U840 C/16/1.

⁵⁷ U840 Q.24.

⁵⁸ U840 T.232.

⁵⁹ Ancestor Search of Frances Pratt. Internet. The younger three daughters were, Elizabeth remained single, Sarah married Nicholas Price of Saintfield, County Down, and Jane married Sir Walter James of Langley Hall, Berkshire.

⁶⁰ U840 C3/11.

⁶¹ U840 5.16.

⁶² *Brecon County Times*, 12.11.1886.

⁶³ *Brycheiniog XXXVI*, p. 78.

⁶⁴ U840 T.143/176.

⁶⁵ NLW Tredegar Papers 154/305.

⁶⁶ U840 T.304. It is difficult to estimate this cash value in present day terms. Whitakers Almanac for 2004 considers on the cost of living index that £1 in 2004 was equal to £58 in 1914. As a rough extrapolation we could say from 1840 to 2006 was of the ratio of not less than 1:100.

⁶⁷ *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Volume 45, p. 222 (2004).

⁶⁸ They married respectively – Harriet, daughter of Dr.Murray, Bishop of Rochester; Lady Clementine Augusta, youngest daughter of the 6th Duke of Marlborough; and Joan Marion, daughter of Lord Henry Nevill 2nd son of the Marquess of Abergavenny. As a measure of their contribution to the County of Kent, full length portraits of the 4th Marquess and Marchioness hang in County Hall, Maidstone.

⁶⁹ Poole, p. 405, Jones, Vol IV, p. 283.

⁷⁰ Details of the Welsh Estates are contained in 63 volumes of *The Welsh Estate Rental Books*, which cover some of the years between 1812 and 1943. U840 AW1-63. For a comparison, a map of the estates of Lord Tredegar in the county of Brecon 1868, with adjoining landowners 1 vol 51 leaves is at NLW 152.

⁷¹ U840 T.146.

⁷² U840 EW46.

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ *Brycheiniog*, Volume VII, p. 51.

⁷⁵ Powys Archives B/D/BM/A79/1/1.

⁷⁶ *Brecon County Times*, 22.8.1868.

⁷⁷ Powys Archives B/X/101.

⁷⁸ *Brecon County Times*, 23.10.1869.

⁷⁹ Ibid., 2.4.1886.

⁸⁰ Ibid., 6.10.1883.

⁸¹ U840 E3,4.

	Receipts	Payments
Bayham	12,365	13,074
Portions	2,266	1,307
Brecon	5,938	4,262
Camden Town	5,289	4,889
Total	25,859	23,534

Portions include Wildernesse Park and other smaller properties.

⁸² *Brecon County Times*, 14.6.1889.

⁸³ U840 P.84. A set of five estate maps.

⁸⁴ *Welsh Estate Rental Books*, U840 AW1-63.

⁸⁵ *Brecon County Times*, 25.7.1890.

⁸⁶ U840 AW1-63.

⁸⁷ *Brecon County Times*, 17.2.1893.

⁸⁸ Ibid 28.4 and 5.5.1893.

⁸⁹ Jones, p. 313.

⁹⁰ U840 AW1-63 It is useful to note, for a comparison, that in this period of 1910-12 the Inland Revenue Valuation Books for the county were published, a copy of which is held in Powys Archives B/LVR/1/14 and 15.

⁹¹ Thompson, F.M.L., *English Landed Society in the 19.c.*, p. 335.

⁹² Powys Archives Breconshire, Box No.8. Those quoted are only some examples.

⁹³ NLW Tredegar Papers 154/305.

⁹⁴ U840 F180.

⁹⁵ Thompson, p. 336.

⁹⁶ I am indebted to Hilary Williams, Camden Road, Brecon for this information

⁹⁷ U840 EW5/2.

⁹⁸ Powys Archives B/D/JPO/22/6.

⁹⁹ U840 AW 1-63.

¹⁰⁰ U840 AW 1-63.

¹⁰¹ U840 EW12.

¹⁰² Powys Archives BD/WJP/3/171.

¹⁰³ U840 EW8-10.

¹⁰⁴ Letter to the author September, 2006.

ON THE HOME FRONT: RURAL LIFE IN BRECONSHIRE DURING THE SECOND WORLD WAR

A visitor from a far-off planet arriving in Britain in May 2005 might probably have thought, as he witnessed the events surrounding the fiftieth anniversary of VE day, that this long and costly 'People's War' was conducted largely in other lands by brave and patriotic military men provided with arms and material from a fully-mobilised industrial economy. As he listened to radio and blinked at television he might have been forgiven for thinking that the cherished countryside of Britain, the Britain of Hardy and Wodehouse – whose preservation, it was claimed by government propaganda, was a primary motivation for squaring up to the Nazi threat – played little role in the whole sanguinary process. Throughout the spring of 2005 neither radio nor television came fully to grips with the remarkable contribution of the countryside to the successful conduct of the war. Indeed, if we leave aside the Blitz, the blackout, evacuation, the ARP, the Home Guard and a few token contributions on agriculture, the rural home front received little serious consideration.

The reality, of course, was very different. As Britain prepared for total war in September 1939 it soon became clear that the countryside would be required to contribute massively if defeat at home through collapsing morale, if not virtual starvation, was to be avoided. Sustaining nutritional intake and calorie levels among the civilian population was viewed by government as an essential means of maintaining morale. The outbreak of war signalled the end to guaranteed supplies of cheap overseas food – the fruit of inter-war free trade policy – and as Nazi U-Boats plied their demonic trade in the Atlantic, imports of food to Britain had fallen by 85% by 1941. While there were those who believed that the normal forces of supply and demand would ensure that the massive shortfall would be readily met by home production and a re-energised agricultural industry, the government was not prepared to take any risks. Accordingly under the Emergency Regulations (Defence) Act of 1939 all formal constitutions were suspended and the production and distribution of food was taken strictly under government control. In effect, fascism was fought with fascism as the Ministry of Agriculture took absolute control of virtually every aspect of farm life, if not rural life itself. At county level, control was exercised through the County War Agricultural Executive Committee (the 'Warag'), an unpaid body appointed by the Minister, with no democratic accountability and answerable only to the Minister himself. Without pursuing the organisational complexities, and leaving aside entirely the vexed question of whether the committees abused their powers or whether individual members used their positions to settle old scores within the community, let me briefly review their duties before moving on to Breconshire itself.

As I hinted, the Warags controlled a huge swathe of agricultural activities from the administration of subsidies and credit, through the organisation of labour, the provision of machinery, the supervision of feed and fertiliser rationing to the promotion of specialist crops. But perhaps the most significant and most controversial roles of the Warags involved the administration and enforcement of what became known as the 'Plough-up' campaign and – as part of that activity – the grading of farms and the monitoring of production at farm level. Essentially this involved classifying every farm in the country according to the extent to which it was achieving its potential production. The idea was that farmers on the lower end of the scale would be provided with an action plan whereby they could upgrade their farm from the lowest status 'C' to 'B' or even 'A'. Ultimately failure to comply with the action plan could lead to confiscation of the farm for the duration of the war and five years afterwards. In Wales as a whole, occupiers of some 26,661 acres were dispossessed, although in Breconshire a mere 13 farms (2218 acres) were taken over by the Warag. The fact that gradings of individual farms were undertaken by Warag officers at district and parish level led to dark hints that personal animosities might result in an individual farm being downgraded by an ill-intentioned appraiser. On the other hand my studies of the Welsh situation lead me to believe that the criticisms of jobbery, favouritism and nepotism are largely unfounded and that in most cases farmers falling foul of Warag gradings were the architects of their own misfortune.¹ This was particularly the case in Breconshire where, by and large, farmers bit the bullet and got on with the job. People might moan and complain of the Warag as 'a modern Gestapo', 'minions of the Minister's arrogant system', agents of 'ruthless rascality' or purveyors of 'a jealous, vengeful attitude', yet the farming population of Breconshire (in marked contrast to their brethren in Cardiganshire and Carmarthenshire) appear to have worked harmoniously with their local committee. This, in a sense, is reflected in the number of court cases brought against Breconshire farmers for failing to comply with specific cultivation orders issued by the Warag. The *Cambrian News* reported 116 court cases in Carmarthenshire and Cardiganshire between 1940 and 1944, relative to a mere 10 in Breconshire as reported in the *Brecon and Radnor County Express* over the same period. Given that the Breconshire Warag issued over 2000 Cultivation Orders each year this was a drop in the ocean, although in each case the court imposed the stiffish fine of £20, whereas Carmarthenshire/Cardiganshire fines rarely exceeded £5. What, I wonder, does this tell us of the socio-political complexion of the magistracy in the respective counties?

When the Lord Lieutenant of Breconshire had been secretly contacted in 1937 and asked for his nomination of a suitable person to chair the proposed Warag, he had little hesitation in naming the Hereford cattle and Kerry sheep breeder Merfyn T. Davies who had been President of the NFU in 1932 and would

eventually be appointed Mayor of Brecon in 1945.² Along with other Executive Committee members Davies set about making appointments to District and Parish Committees and setting up the various technical and advisory bodies which would serve the county throughout the war. Eventually the 15 man Executive Committee oversaw 12 man District Committees for Devynock, Brecon, Builth and Talgarth, supported by no less than 12 technical sub-committees whose membership included numerous salaried specialists, many from Farm Institutes and Agricultural Colleges which had suspended operations for the duration of the war. Perhaps I can introduce a minor element of controversy at this point as much as anything else to draw attention to the kindness of Mr John Davies, son of Merfyn T. Davies, in writing to me about his part-time work with the Warag as a schoolboy during the war. After reading Mr Davies' letter, I happened to come across a Parliamentary question asked of the Minister of Agriculture by Ness Edwards (Labour, Caerphilly) in February 1944 to the effect that was the Minister aware of any Welsh Warags employing the sons of committee members. The Minister coolly responded that he was aware of a single case and *unaware* of any criticism of this among Welsh farming circles.³ Who was this, I wonder, before quickly moving on!

In their effort to maximise food production from all available acres, the Breconshire Warag was unstintingly supported by the *Brecon and Radnor Express*. Like most local papers, the *Express* editorial staff may have found aspects of the Committee's work worthy of criticism, but nevertheless kept their counsel for fear of being thought unpatriotic or of being seen to act in a way contrary to the war effort. Whatever the case, the paper recognised the need to propagandise agricultural matters. Editorials embodied weekly encouragement to farmers, and Warag experts of various descriptions were offered numerous column inches for the purposes of giving advice or instruction. Stalwarts like Miss Tredgett-Cock, Poultry Advisor for Brecon and Radnor, wrote frequently and at length on poultry matters, her pieces appearing alongside block advertisements with sterling exhortations to farmers. Thus 'Ploughing is the key for victory'; 'Make every field give a greater yield' and kindred material. The paper was also proactive in a series of wartime campaigns – typically those of rat and pigeon clearance. While the rapacity of the rat was often compared with that of Hitler himself in adverts in the *Express*, the need to clear (or even eliminate) the woodpigeon was perceived of equal importance. Thus it was that the *Express* orchestrated the Saturday afternoon campaigns of pigeon shooting, bringing together the NFU, CLA and British Field Sports Society to wage the vital struggle. At the same time editorials were quick to point out the need for all shooters to return spent cartridges since every bit of brass and paper was needed for recycling.⁴ The paper also served as a source of market intelligence of vital importance to farmers, gardeners and others involved in the 'Dig for Victory'

campaign which I shall mention later. As the war went on these reports make increasingly bleak reading. In February 1942, for example, Brecon Market had little to show but a few boiling fowls, some eggs and cabbages, but no apples. There were plenty of rabbits to be had but there was little demand for them – perhaps because they were readily available from poachers.⁵ Interestingly enough, despite the Warag's appeals to farmers to destroy the voracious rabbit by any means possible, rabbit poachers were almost weekly hauled before the Brecon magistrates. Perhaps this was a device whereby the propertied classes were able, despite the wartime situation, to demonstrate that the old order still had its hand to the rural tiller. Indeed, throughout the war, the protection of personal property remained paramount in Breconshire. Thus it was that in May 1942, the War Office department in Brecon placed an advertisement for alsatians, bull terriers, mastiffs and lurchers which could be made available to protect bombed or otherwise damaged buildings from looters.⁶ Again, despite the exigencies of war, reports from the courts suggest that throughout rural Breconshire the police assiduously pursued seemingly trivial offences. We find people being arraigned for riding defective bicycles, for killing pigs without a licence, for selling eggs to unlicensed buyers, for selling oats without obtaining appropriate documents, for cutting up roads with the spiked wheels of tractors and all manner of other minor infringements.⁷ Perhaps these cases were pursued (and reported in hundreds of column inches) as a means of demonstrating the need for both personal and collective discipline?

But back to the land itself. To meet the compelling demand for directly-consumable human food in the form of cereals and potatoes, not only were there drastic culls of livestock in the first year of the war, but plans were made to cash in on the fertility of the millions of acres of land which had tumbled down to grass in the depressed inter-war years. Aided by subsidies on lime and basic slag together with a government payment of £2 per acre, farmers ploughed an extra 6 million acres of England and 1 million acres of Wales during the course of the war so that the output of cereals advanced by 70% and potatoes by 95%. Meanwhile farm profits escalated and farmers enjoyed a level of prosperity unheard of since the previous war. The drive to maximise production of starches continued into the 1950s as British farmers helped to feed a European population physically and psychologically devastated and suffering the consequences of a series of poor harvests. Those people who recall the austerity of wartime rationing would do well also to remember that the average UK calorie intake in 1948 was 2923 calories per day, while that of liberated Europe was less than 2000.

In October 1939 it was noted in an *Express* leader that blacksmiths throughout Breconshire were busily mending ploughs and other equipment which had been rusting under hedges in many cases since the previous war.⁸ The county had

been given a quota of 10,000 extra acres of land to plough in 1939–40 and despite farmers' complaints that they had insufficient labour, they did in fact plough an additional 16,000 acres by April 1940 and effectively extended the arable acreage of the county by almost 80,000 acres by 1945. Typically a 150 acre farm which had had 20 acres of ploughed land under cereals before the war was now expected to turn over 50 acres and possibly grow 5 or so acres of potatoes as well. Spurred on by the *Express* and by proselytising agricultural experts like Sir George Stapledon who travelled from Aberystwyth to lecture at the Wellington Hall, Brecon in September 1940, farmers set to work with a will.⁹ Horses were fittened, tractors serviced and sleeves rolled up. Initially there was the problem of tractor shortage, there being only some 1600 tractors in Wales in 1939. Over the course of the next couple of years the machinery situation was eased as American equipment became available under the Lease-Lend system – the *Express* taking the opportunity to urge farmers to put the machines to maximum use by ploughing and cultivating throughout day and night. After all if American and colonial farmers were themselves going without agricultural equipment so as to allow it to come to Britain, it ill behove any farmer not to use it fully.¹⁰ While there is a tendency to emphasise the massive significance of the 'plough-up' campaign as a contribution to victory on the Home Front, it is equally important to note the growing importance of liquid milk consumption. Dairying for the purposes of producing liquid milk (as opposed to butter and cheese) had been expanding in Wales since the early 1930s and had been the salvation of many a small farmer confronted with the realities of the inter-war depression.¹¹ As war broke out and government health advisors divined the value of milk as a basis for adequate nutrition, farmers were strongly encouraged to increase production and to achieve annual wartime targets.¹² By the spring of 1942 Breconshire was facing a target of 2 million gallons yearly, most of this to be produced from home-produced forages.¹³ Almost inevitably, as the demand for milk grew, there arose the temptation for adulteration, either by producer-retailers or by milk roundsmen. Edward Morgan, fined £10 by Builth Wells magistrates for watering down milk for sale in 1942, urged in his defence that he had been forced to add a little water to his product because milk supplies were short!¹⁴ Although I cite Morgan, he was merely one of many milk adulterators who appeared almost weekly before the magistrates, who took a very dim view of the practice.

Be it cereals, potatoes or milk, extra production in Britain had to be achieved against a continual haemorrhage of land for the building of aerodomes, military camps, munitions factories and army training grounds. In Britain as a whole almost half a million acres were lost for this purpose of which Breconshire contributed nearly 40,000 acres of the Epynt and Bwlch y Groes when the War Office bought this land for training purposes in May 1940. The efforts of the

Epynt Protection Society notwithstanding, 280 farmers were obliged to evacuate their holdings and sell their stock at dispersal sales.¹⁵ It was losses of land of this sort which lent strength to the national 'Dig for Victory' campaign, pursued across a broad front and with extraordinary vigour in this county. Encouraged by the Mayor of Brecon, Alderman Parry de Winton, schoolchildren were urged to devise appropriate slogans to persuade virtuous Breconians to cultivate their gardens in the long evenings of double summer time. And they came up with some good ones, 'Hasten the peace by digging your piece'; 'Grow your own food and put Hitler in the soup'; 'Spades are trumps to beat the enemy's game', and my favourite, 'Slim in the garden to fatten the war effort'.¹⁶ The length and breadth of the county children played a major role in 'Dig for Victory' activities. Schools raised vegetables in vacant areas of the school yard, in playing fields or even on rented land. Brecon County Girls School, for example, rented three-quarters of an acre close to the school where girls worked the land to produce vegetables, eventually receiving a prize from the Breconshire Agricultural Society for so doing.¹⁷ The efforts of schools, individuals and self-help groups towards 'Dig for Victory' were considerably stimulated in 1943 when the County Produce Movement was established. In linking together the efforts of far-flung villages, this movement was effectively a cooperative purchasing body which exploited economies of scale to offer 'diggers' cheaper inputs while also mounting a series of demonstrations and lectures.¹⁸ The movement worked in close collaboration with The Brecon County Herb Committee whose primary task, under the Ministry of Supply, was to coordinate the rose-hip collection scheme. As I am sure everyone knows, rose-hips were collected for conversion to Vitamin C, and in the case of this county, rose-hips collected by children could be taken to the WVS office in Brecon where 2 shillings per stone was paid.¹⁹ Another collection centre was located at Talgarth, to which 6 tons of rose-hips were delivered during the course of 1943.²⁰ That year schools were very active in the rose-hip campaign. Hay school managed 95lbs, Llangorse 1 cwt. 13lbs, Trallong 1 cwt. 91lbs, while Upper Chapel School only picked 4.25lbs. Whether this was due to lack of enthusiasm, lack of children or lack of dog-roses I cannot say.²¹ As an aside perhaps I can mention another form of collecting brought to my attention by Mr John Pyper of Llangammarch Wells Local History Society. As part of their Oral History Project members of the Society are gathering information on a variety of rural issues and a conversation with retired farmer, Mr Emrys Davies, revealed that government vets regularly harvested blood from pregnant mares in and around the Epynt during the war years. This was allegedly used for the production of anti-sera against tetanus and gas gangrene, frequent consequences of gunshot and shrapnel wounds. It may even, perhaps, have been associated with the very early studies of the pharmacological role of pregnant mare's serum gonadotrophin. In any event it was a remunerative

exercise for the farmers involved. But to return to the children.

As in the rest of the county, Breconshire children played a major role in the food production effort and I shall say a few words about this later on. For the moment let me make the point that when the Breconshire Education Committee agreed in 1941 to fix the school holidays to coincide with cereal and potato harvests, children were available to work alongside volunteers and soldiers at this vital time of the year – especially following apposite exhortations from Mayor de Winton in the *Express*.²² Potatoes were a sort of national insurance against starvation. By the summer of 1942 Germany had been forced to cut her potato ration by 50%, so that as a matter of morale-boosting honour it was vital that Britain maintained her ration and grew and stored the maximum acreage.²³ And potatoes were grown (not always successfully) nearly everywhere in Wales. The tops of the Dolfor Hills above Newtown were ploughed out from bracken and cultivated for potatoes; the periphery of Borth Bog in Cardiganshire was reclaimed for the precious root, while in this county, at 1200 feet above sea level on Rhosfawr Common on the edge of the Black Mountain near Talgarth, the Breconshire Warag ploughed up 150 unlikely acres for potatoes.²⁴ These were planted by the splendid matrons of Talgarth WI in the spring of 1942 and harvested later in the year by local schoolchildren assisted by evacuees from St. Saviour's School, Southwark who were given an extra week's holiday for the purpose.²⁵

On their return from potato-picking the evacuees worked alongside other children collecting scrap metal or old aluminium saucepans (like my correspondent Mr John Coombe) or even scrap food for pig feeding. Thus we note, under a photograph of some fine-looking baconers, Mrs Perry of Brecon using the good offices of the *Express* to thank the schoolchildren who had collected the household scraps upon which the animals had been fattened. I don't know whether Mrs Perry was a member of the WVS; perhaps she was too preoccupied with her pigs. However, her friends and neighbours in the WVS performed a number of very valuable Home Front roles including cooking meals for refugees and evacuees and, in particular, the knitting of 'comforts' for the troops and the collection of second-hand clothes for distribution in the blitzed areas of Britain's towns and cities. The demand for warm gloves, socks and underclothes both by our own troops and by our allies on the Russian Front was almost insatiable, and the local WVS organiser, the Hon. Mrs Dulcie Cooper appealed almost weekly through the *Express* for more knitters to come forward.²⁶ As the War Office and Red Cross distributed wool throughout the county, the fingers of both matrons and maidens clicked away by cottage fireside and in village hall so that by July 1945 more than 120,000 items of clothing had been knitted. Even after the scheme was terminated in October and surplus War Office wool returned, Mrs Cooper continued to appeal for volunteers to knit

football socks for the South Wales Borderers.²⁷

As Britain and rural Breconshire geared up for total war, the problem of mobilising sufficient labour to sustain the Home Front – and especially the rural Home Front – had to be addressed. Immediately after the outbreak of war, many farm workers who had not been called up to the armed services had drifted from the land in pursuit of more lucrative jobs in the construction or munitions industries. After all, why should a man work on the land for a pittance when he could earn £7 weekly on emergency building work – as an unskilled labourer on aerodrome construction, for instance? It soon became clear to the Committee of Imperial Defence that this situation could not be tolerated and in the spring of 1940 the farm worker's wage was advanced to 48 shillings [£2.40] per week. Moreover, under the Defence Regulations, all men with agricultural experience were ordered to return to the land and reserved farm workers (i.e. those reserved from military service) were directed to remain on their farms. Even so, farm staff continued to be lost as men volunteered to fight and with the departure to their neutral home of most of the large Irish itinerant labour force late in 1939, the labour situation began to look critical. Many people believed that harvests would be gathered by prisoners of war as in 1914–18; but the fact was that by December 1940 there were a mere 46 Italian prisoners in Britain. This number would increase dramatically following Wavell's successes in North Africa and by the middle of 1943 after the collapse of Italy, 52,000 Italian prisoners were working on British farms. Indeed, many of these men remained throughout the war following an agreement with the new Italian government that workers would be well-rewarded if they were prepared to forgo repatriation and remain in Britain to fight Germany in a non-combative role. German prisoners, of course, provided another source of labour, 95,000 of them employed on British farms in 1944 and 186,000 by June 1946. In the potato harvest of that year, 890,000 people were engaged. These included 70,000 volunteers, 30,000 members of the Women's Land Army, 200,000 children and 180,000 German prisoners and Polish labourers. The Poles, remnants of General Anders' army, now resettled in Britain, worked as volunteers, while many of the Germans whose homes lay in the Russian sector of the defeated Reich were none too enthusiastic immediately to return home.²⁸

I mentioned earlier that some 70,000 volunteer workers contributed to gathering the harvest of 1946. Adult volunteer labour had been a significant feature of life in the countryside throughout the war. At various times industrial and commercial organisations allowed workers extra holidays in order to attend harvest camps whereby people spent 2–3 weeks of the summer under canvas, working on farms and being paid for so doing. This was seen by many as a means whereby urban people could get a break from the daily grind in the fresh air and carry out valuable work at the same time. In any event between 80- and

100,000 people attended Warag-organised harvest camps each year of the war. Meanwhile urban and village authorities set up a plethora of voluntary organisations including Emergency Land Clubs, Voluntary Land Clubs, Weekend Farmers' Friend Clubs and all manner of kindred groups with the sole objective of getting as many people as possible to give their time for harvest work.²⁹ In Breconshire these activities were coordinated by W. J. Cowie, the Labour Officer and heavily propagandized by Mayor de Winton himself. Appealing in July 1943 to the citizens of Brecon, he assured his readers that '... if they will now join the army of willing workers . . . they will get a new thrill and fresh enjoyment they have never dreamt of before'.³⁰ That same year the Warag established six harvest camps in the county, the principal one at Hay-on-Wye where the ever-enthusiastic WVS undertook catering arrangements.³¹ In the meantime the Breconshire WI busied themselves with drawing up registers of people in different parts of the county prepared to undertake spare-time farm work.³² Even after VE Day, editorials in the *Express* constantly stress the need for the continuation of voluntary effort. In June 1945 the Warag Executive Officer appealed for all hands to be set to the pumps since, 'the maintenance of our present rations depends on crops being safely gathered in.'³³

And then, of course, there were the children. Schoolchildren, as I mentioned before, collected rose-hips for Vitamin C, stinging nettles for quinine and foxglove, centuary, yarrow and conkers for all manner of arcane purposes. This apart, they helped with rat-catching, plucking poultry, snaring rabbits and all sorts of other murderous but necessary activities generally agreeable to young boys in particular. Of even greater significance, throughout England and Wales as a whole, children attending harvest camps contributed 1 million boy/girl weeks of labour throughout the war. These camps, initiated by the public schools and taken up by many schools across the country, were once again overseen by the Warags – the idea being that the children would be paid by the farmers and that after camp costs had been met any surplus would be divided between participants. If the harvest camps were important, so too was the contribution of children at other times of the agricultural year. Most people will be aware that local education authorities agreed to schedule school holidays in accordance with the demands of harvesting. Less familiar is the fact that during the war, children were allowed 20 half days per year off school (on a voluntary basis) to work on the farm. This concession was achieved by the Ministry of Agriculture in 1940 against the opposition of the NUT who worried at the effect on educational standards, the NUAW (worried about the 'casualisation' of farm labour) and the TUC who were especially concerned about potential exploitation. In reality, children working on farms or anywhere else during school hours were illegal under the Education Acts, although in many rural areas a blind eye had usually been turned. However the Minister of Agriculture, R. S. Hudson, neatly

circumvented the legal obstacle by invoking the convenient instrument of the Defence Regulations much to the impotent fury of the Unions. Teachers in particular were very worried. Exploitation apart, they believed that once they had worked on farms away from the strict discipline of school, children would become difficult to handle, their sense of values would change, their sense of duty would be eroded and the world turned upside down. As one headmaster wrote, '... for a child of twelve to earn 35 shillings or £2 per week is a dangerous experiment leading not only to false values but to something approaching truculence among some children on their return to school.'³⁴ Ultimately the practice continued until 1950; the contribution of schoolchildren to food production in the war having been without question absolutely vital.

In like manner that splendid body, the Women's Land Army which, until recently has been denied the recognition it deserves, contributed to the food production effort. Initially derided both by farmers and the aged wisecracks representing the rump of the wartime farm labour force, the girls soon mastered a whole range of farm tasks, handled the eccentric and capricious lease-lend tractors with more facility than their ancient male colleagues and earned the respect of all who lived and worked in the countryside. On September 21, 1939, Mrs Charles Morgan of Builth Wells (widely known as the novelist Hilda Vaughan) announced to the world that she would follow up her activities as WLA organiser for Brecon and Radnor in World War I by revitalising the movement during the present war.³⁵ But after this single announcement she disappears from the record and the organising genius behind the WLA emerged as Mrs Houston of Newbridge-on-Wye who remained Secretary of the organisation for the rest of the war, being assisted in the constant drive for recruitment by Mrs Gibson-Watt in Radnorshire. In the winter of 1939 and the spring of the next year the main thrust of recruiting was among local girls who, after a month's training, would be placed on farms by the County Secretary. Here they would be paid 22 shillings and sixpence weekly (rising to 28 shillings at the age of 18) the farmer deducting 14 shillings for board and lodging in the case of billetees.³⁶ The Army was especially keen to attract local girls since to do so would reduce the need to provide accommodation for those not lodging on farms. But this proved to be easier said than done despite seductive recruitment films screened at all the main cinemas in the county in April 1940. When the film was shown at the Castle Cinema in Builth, '... three splendid landgirls in the audience' testified to the fact that it didn't paint an over-rosy picture, while one farmer employer breathlessly told the assembled gathering about his landgirl who was '... radiantly happy on a most isolated farm where she was giving every satisfaction'.³⁷ But the many attractions of Breconshire bucolic life seem, in the main, not to have been to the taste of the local ladies and the net was cast widely so that before long most WLA recruits working in the county were from

Lancashire and Cheshire. Descending on Strand Hall in Builth Wells, lent by Mr Herbert Lloyd as an equipment store, the girls received their kit.³⁸ This included a pair of shoes, a pair of boots and a pair of gumboots annually, together with a complete uniform, ‘. . . being of excellent quality material, and suitable for all kinds of farm work, and really very attractive’.³⁹

However much farmers might moan about having lost men to the armed forces and grouse about the WLA being merely a ‘fill gap’, the fact remains that demand for landgirls in Breconshire outstripped supply as more and more men were called to arms. This prompted one of Mrs Houston’s many good ideas: that of creating an Auxiliary Force who would help with harvest work by committing 4–6 weeks of the summer to the purpose. The Force would include lady hikers, cyclists, tourists, and even travelling groups of girl students who might feel impelled to combine ‘pleasure and service’ by contributing landwork during the vacations. If the drive to set up the Auxiliary Force was less than successful (and one finds no reference to it in subsequent years) it was not for want of trying on the part of Mrs Houston and her colleagues. Advertisements in the national press emphasising the attractions of Breconshire were the main weapon in the recruiting armoury, speaking of the county’s ‘. . . flowing rivers, sylvan beauty and rugged grandeur’.⁴⁰ But it was not enough. Nor yet was the high profile given in promotional material to Miss Joyce Woods, a landgirl employed at Abernant, near Builth who received in July 1940 the WLA medal for 6 months continual service on the land.⁴¹ The fact that someone could be commended for 6 months service implies that the average length of service in Breconshire was rather brief – especially when I think of my own mother’s 3 years of unbroken service in Northamptonshire.

In the autumn of 1940 the WLA detachments in the individual counties of south Wales were grouped together for administrative purposes with their headquarters in Carmarthen.⁴² Nevertheless the Brecon and Radnor WLA continued to organise their activities independently and by September 1941 hostels were located at Silver Street, Brecon, at Crossgates (Radnorshire) and Maesllwch Castle near Glasbury. The latter was opened by Mrs Gibson-Watt and blessed by the Rev. Charles Thomas of Glasbury on September 16 and it became home to fifty ‘. . . young, strong and very pretty’ girls from Lancashire.⁴³ A year later hostels at Whitton and Builth joined the others and were also celebrated as repositories of youth and glamour.⁴⁴ It is interesting to speculate on the *frisson* induced by these exotics among the solid and respectable gentlemen of rural Breconshire! This would doubtless have been pooh-poohed by Mrs Gibson-Watt and Mrs Houston who went to great lengths to ensure that the girls were kept on the straight-and-narrow by seeing that they were regularly entertained with ENSA concerts. Any lascivious thoughts among the girls at the Builth hostel would have faded away as they thrilled to the performance of a Mr Lynn and his

partner as they strutted their stuff with accordion and ukulele on April 12 1943.⁴⁵ This heady and uplifting stuff was regular Saturday night fare for the landgirl in Breconshire. From time-to-time the girls themselves put on a concert for the paying public as a means of raising money for 'Wings for Victory', the Spitfire campaign or some other wartime cause. Just before Christmas 1943 the Maesllwch residents gave a two hour show at the castle. Miss Ives brought on roars of laughter for her interpretation of 'Galoping Gertie'; Miss Garside won the undying admiration of the audience for singing melliflously with a heavy cold; various sketches earned '... roars of laughter and applause' while the Jitterbug was performed by the company in '... a most pleasing costume'.⁴⁶ A year later the Brecon-based girls gave a charity concert in St. Michael's Hall where a large audience enjoyed tap-dancing, singing and ballet. The occasion was graced by the presence of the great and the good including Merfyn Davies, Mayor de Winton (who rarely missed one of these concerts) and the local MP, W. F. Jackson.⁴⁷

The concerts, of course, were merely spare-time activities, rehearsed and put together at the end of long days of unremitting labour on the land, often under the most difficult circumstances. It is worth remembering that most of the Breconshire-based landgirls had come from urban backgrounds. They had had not only to learn the basics of farm work, but also to achieve an understanding of the *mores*, the way of life of the countryman – and the Welsh countryman at that. To many this would have been a singular experience. The hundred and fifty Breconshire landgirls who gained proficiency certificates in 1944 had travelled a long way.⁴⁸ And that way had been rough and occasionally dangerous. When Muriel Brown and Alice Wright represented the county at the Lord Mayor's Mansion House party for the WLA in December 1945, they probably thought fondly of Elsie Rawlinson.⁴⁹ Elsie, a happy-go-lucky 19 year old living at Maesllwch Castle, had been killed in August 1943 when a tractor she was driving had rolled over and crushed her.⁵⁰

Two years later, in the bitter winter of 1945 when forty degrees of frost affected Brecon in the first week of February and the Swansea-Brecon road was blocked with snow drifts 6 feet deep, another tragic death occurred. Barry Button, a 7 year-old evacuee, fell through the ice in the frozen river Yskir and despite the efforts of his friends to help him, was drowned. This sad event brings us neatly to the issue of evacuation to rural Breconshire. The general history and mythology of evacuation is well-known. In short, at the time of Munich almost half of all London school children and two-thirds of those from the great Lancastrian conurbations were drafted in to the countryside, most of them returning home by early 1940 when it was clear that urban Britain was not for the moment, at least, going to be bombed into extinction. But both these and later evacuations created all manner of problems both for evacuees and their

hosts. To many evacuees the countryside was a totally alien environment; of strange animals, dark night skies, and above all, queer rural folk with curious ways of speaking and out-dated views of the world as a whole. In such circumstances, profound difficulties could follow in the wake of sensitive children being billeted on rough farming families or Catholic children being drafted to the Welsh countryside where they might be confronted by a narrow Calvinism and a shortage of Roman Catholic churches. Meanwhile country people were astounded by the condition of many evacuees who were poorly clothed and shod, infected with impetigo, scabies, and lice and accompanied in many cases by unkempt and slatternly mothers. Bed-wetting was common, and contemporary reports indicate that up to 10% of evacuated children had never received any form of toilet training and many had never slept *in* a bed, being forced due to over crowding, to sleep *under* the bed occupied by brothers and sisters. The conditions which many of these unfortunates had left behind were deeply shocking; 90% of evacuated Stepney children came from homes without baths, while the corresponding proportions for Glasgow and Birmingham were 50% and 23%.⁵¹ Little wonder, that people in the remote reaches of Breconshire responded to the possibility of large numbers of evacuees with some misgivings, particularly when it became clear in May and June 1940 that evacuees to the county would not be short-term visitors, but might remain for some years.

The archives of the Breconshire County Council reveal that meetings to consider ways and means of coping with refugees from aerial attack had been taking place since late in 1937.⁵² By June 1939 billeting officers were assessing the amount and quality of accommodation available. Typically, the officer from the Hay Rural District Council visited every house in the ten parishes of his district before drawing up a detailed inventory of habitable rooms, their suitability for unaccompanied children, teachers and others, and the amount of additional bedding which might be required.⁵³ He was also closely involved with Ministry of Health officials in selecting and equipping property in Hay itself to serve as an isolation hospital for cleaning up evacuees infested with vermin or suffering from one of a variety of skin conditions.⁵⁴ To the isolation hospitals in Brecon, Hay, Talgarth and elsewhere were drafted the unfortunate bed-wetters in the latter years of the year. Initially the Ministry of Health had provided householders with extra blankets, rubber sheets and other impedimenta to help with this problem.⁵⁵ But it soon became clear that many of those people with bed-wetters billeted on them would not put up with the unsanitary habit and the children were unceremoniously bundled off to the isolation 'hospital'. This practice, of course, probably did a great deal of harm and, in any event, would have caused a modern child psychologist's hair to turn grey overnight! The billeting officer's lot, if not necessarily a happy one, was certainly a busy one. William Williams, one of the billeting officers for Brecon Rural District between 1942 and 1943, kept a

detailed and rather remarkable log of his activities as a basis for justifying claims for travelling expenses. Finding billets, distributing blankets, arranging with Brecon Poor Law Institute to disinfect soiled blankets, rebilleting evacuees from homes unable to cope, liaising with the police over fraudulent claims for billeting allowances and trying to adjudicate in cases where evacuees claimed to have been mistreated, were just some aspects of his daily routine. If this were not enough, he frequently had to ponder over what was to be done with evacuees who were 'unfit to be billeted in consequence of their dirty habits', or to engage in lengthy meetings with the Welfare Officer of the London County Council in the hope that he would be able to provide for the many London children evacuated to Brecon who were not being sent to school because they had no suitable clothes or shoes.⁵⁶ It is difficult, when reading this most interesting of manuscripts, not to recall the egregious Basil Seal in Evelyn Waugh's *Put Out More Flags*, as he scours the country trying to palm off the Connolly family who were, judged by any standards, the evacuees from hell!

As the first of the 2515 evacuees allocated to the county arrived in May 1940, the local authorities were galvanised into a flurry of action. Billeting Officers were appointed, tribunals to hear appeals against billeting convened and heated debate enjoined at County Council meetings as to whether or not London County Council should cover the cost of evacuees' medical care. Debating the issues was one thing; dealing with practicalities on the ground was quite another matter. Reception centres for evacuees had to be established, meals provided and baths given before parents, teachers and children were taken to their billets. And therein lay the first problem. By the end of May some 300 evacuees and their teachers had arrived in Brecon and only 130 people had volunteered to accommodate them with the result that Mr Price, the Sanitary Officer-cum-Billeting Officer was given compulsory powers to requisition billets. A similar attitude prevailed in the rural districts around Builth whence 100 Kentish children descended at the end of May. What was to be done, complained the farmers and their families? After all, farm women already had full-time jobs without being saddled with looking after evacuees. But D. Llewellyn Thomas, the local billeting officer, had little sympathy with this outlook and he managed to house 149 mothers and 265 children by resorting to compulsory powers.⁵⁷ While local newspapers offer no evidence of individuals being prosecuted for refusing to take on evacuees, the overwhelming impression is that they were received with less than white-hot enthusiasm. In Rhayader the residents complained that evacuees 'with pots of money' were buying up all the unrationed foods (particularly sausages) so that by the end of autumn they, the locals, were beginning to feel the pinch of hunger.⁵⁸ Perhaps we should take this with the proverbial pinch of salt!

For all the undercurrent of complaint about evacuees and the fact that as in the rest of Britain, some were doubtless subject to abuse and exploitation, evacuees to Breconshire seem, by and large, to have enjoyed and profited from the experience. When Horeb Congregational Young People's Guild met at Builth on February 16 1942, they presented a Bible to Andrew Howarth, a Liverpool evacuee who had assiduously attended Sunday School and had been '... extremely well-behaved'.⁵⁹ One would like to think that decent behaviour was not the only criterion and that young Andrew's spiritual welfare had also benefited from these lengthy Sunday sessions. In November 1943 ninety-eight evacuees from Joseph Lancaster School in London gave a concert for the citizens of Hay-on-Wye with whom they had been billeted for 4 years. Before they left a few weeks later, the children and their teacher, a Miss Cox, presented a brass plaque as a token of gratitude and as a testament as how happy they had been during their sojourn in Breconshire.⁶⁰

This was echoed by the Mayor of Bootle in Lancashire in a speech of thanks to the County Council early in 1945.⁶¹ In May the same year, at an official ceremony to bid farewell to the county's final evacuees, Mrs Harries of Bethel Street, Brecon received a case of silver forks and spoons as a tribute to her selfless devotion to the cause. Throughout the war she had offered shelter to seven adults and eighteen children. Sterling service indeed!⁶²

As the last evacuees drifted away, and demobilised military personnel began to return to the towns and villages of Britain, thoughts of reconstruction were uppermost in the minds of planners in Whitehall and elsewhere. Centrally it was recognised that although rural Britain had been spared the physical horrors of bombing, it had nonetheless undergone its share of privation while concurrently contributing to food production and thus general morale. Indeed, given the catastrophic pan-European food situation it was clear at the close of the war that a highly-productive agricultural industry would continue to be of the utmost significance for an indefinite period. The 1946 Hill Farming Act and the Agriculture Act of 1947 which enshrined the principle of subsidies for home agriculture ensured that the rural world would not be forced to confront the slump and depression which had followed World War I. In a sense these Acts served to reward a 'patriotic' agricultural industry, although, of course, everyone knew that in reality the farmers had done rather well out of the war as had been the case in earlier conflicts. But the 1947 act carried a sting in its tail. In the interests of promoting an efficient agriculture, farmers would continue to be subject to Cultivation Orders under the watchful eye of the County Agricultural Executive Committee – in essence the Warag without the 'W' – until 1958 when restrictions were removed. Output of food was to be maximised at all costs and every sinew would be stretched to encourage mechanisation, farm rationalisation and the development of intensive agriculture. This, it was believed, would

revitalise the countryside and retain the rural social infrastructure so vital to British life. There was much talk of land nationalisation among the Trade Unions, although the Labour Party quietly dropped the issue from its manifesto on the grounds that it would prove too costly, too complex and an administrative nightmare. On the other hand Labour took the view that the wartime experience had demonstrated the benefits of state intervention and, via the CAECs the government should retain some control over the efficiency of an industry which was to enjoy heavy support from the public purse. These issues were eagerly debated at NFU and YFC meetings throughout Breconshire, also taking up many column inches of the *Express*. Former local MP W. F. Jackson wanted to see large areas of upland and hill taken over by the authorities and subject to a form of cooperative management along the lines of the Tennessee Valley Authority, or a Soviet collective. The Breconshire NFU, though, would have nothing to do with this, arguing that any form of cooperation/collectivisation ran counter to the Welsh countryman's belief in sturdy independence. Could you really, they asked, accept the view that just because a farm got bigger, it became more efficient? Of course not they averred; the level of efficiency depended primarily on the competence of the individual farmer.

Students of rural reconstruction and the evolution of a highly-intensive system of farming which characterised the last half of the twentieth century and which is (wrongly in my view) so reviled in the first decade of the twenty first, will find all the arguments rehearsed in the *Brecon and Radnor Express*. In fact the wartime experience of rural Breconshire with its varied topography, its range of agricultural systems and its collection of modest-sized market towns closely reflects other counties of Britain. Here and elsewhere the rural community pulled together in a manner which ensured that levels of food supplies on the Home Front remained at the very least adequate. Concurrently they contributed financially, both through their taxes and their personal generosity, to the broader war effort. Close to Capel Maelog in Llandrindod Wells is a group of mature trees planted in 1946 to commemorate the raising of £35,467 by the rural communities of Brecon and Radnor towards the Red Cross Agriculture Fund. Without efforts of this sort and without the Herculean efforts of hundreds of thousands of people in all walks of life, the chances are that these islands would have been starved into submission before the first Nazi jackboot trod on British soil.

R. J. MOORE-COLYER

NOTES

- ¹ Moore-Colyer, R. J., 'A Rule of Tyranny? County War Agriculture Executive Committees in England and Wales, 1939–1949', *Welsh History Review*, 22 (3), 2005, pp. 558–587.
- ² *Brecon and Radnor County Times*, 8 November 1945.
- ³ Parliamentary Debates (Commons), 397, 1943–4. For composition of individual committees see also National Archives, MAF 112/243.
- ⁴ *Brecon and Radnor County Times*, 17 December 1942.
- ⁵ *Ibid.*, 12 February 1942.
- ⁶ *Ibid.*, 7 May 1942.
- ⁷ *Ibid.*, 8 February 1942.
- ⁸ *Ibid.*, 5 October 1939.
- ⁹ *Ibid.*, 24 September 1942.
- ¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 24 September 1942.
- ¹¹ Moore-Colyer, R. J., 'Farming in Depression: Wales between the Wars, 1919–1939', *Agricultural History Review*, 46, 1998, pp. 177–196.
- ¹² *Brecon and Radnor County Times*, 12 February 1942.
- ¹³ *Ibid.*, 7 May 1942.
- ¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 12 February 1942.
- ¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 23 May, 1940.
- ¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 2 May 1942.
- ¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 16 October 1941.
- ¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 14 June 1943.
- ¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 17 September 1943.
- ²⁰ *Ibid.*, 2 September 1943.
- ²¹ *Ibid.*, 21 October, 1943.
- ²² *Ibid.*, 11 September 1941.
- ²³ *Ibid.*, 8 October 1942.
- ²⁴ *Ibid.*, 1 May 1942.
- ²⁵ *Ibid.*, 2 September 1943.
- ²⁶ *Ibid.*, 13 June 1944.
- ²⁷ *Ibid.*, 11 October 1945.
- ²⁸ Moore-Colyer, R. J., *Prisoners of war and the struggle for food production*, in Short, B., Watkins C., and Martin J. (eds.), *Agriculture in the Second World War* (forthcoming).
- ²⁹ Moore-Colyer, R. J., 'Volunteer Labour and the Second World War', *Rural History, Economy, Society and Culture*, 17(1), 2006, pp. 83–101.
- ³⁰ *Brecon and Radnor Express*, 8 July 1943.
- ³¹ *Ibid.*, 10 June 1943.
- ³² *Ibid.*, 14 June 1943.
- ³³ *Ibid.*, 7 June 1945.
- ³⁴ Moore-Colyer, R. J., 'Kids in the corn; School harvest camps and farm labour supply in England, 1940–1950', *Agricultural History Review*, 52, 2004, pp. 183–206.
- ³⁵ *Brecon and Radnor Express*, 21 September 1939.
- ³⁶ *Ibid.*, 23 November 1939.
- ³⁷ *Ibid.*, 11 April and 2 May 1940.
- ³⁸ *Ibid.*, 22 February 1940.
- ³⁹ *Ibid.*, 11 April 1940.
- ⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 18 April 1940.
- ⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 23 July 1940.

- ⁴² *Ibid.*, 19 September 1940.
- ⁴³ *Ibid.*, 18 September 1941.
- ⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 7 September 1942.
- ⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 15 April 1943.
- ⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 23 December 1943.
- ⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 23 February 1944.
- ⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 16 March 1944.
- ⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 20 December 1945.
- ⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 5 August 1943.
- ⁵¹ Calder, A., *The Peoples War, Britain, 1939–45*, Cape, London, 1969, p. 281.
- ⁵² Powys RO, BC/10/1.
- ⁵³ Powys RO, B/RD/HA/220/2.
- ⁵⁴ Powys RO, B/RD/HA/225.
- ⁵⁵ Powys RO, B/BR/22.
- ⁵⁶ Powys RO, B/RD/BR/220.
- ⁵⁷ *Brecon and Radnor Express*, 30 October 1940.
- ⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 28 November 1940.
- ⁵⁹ *Brecon and Radnor Express*, 19 February 1942.
- ⁶⁰ Personal communication from J. N. Gibbs, Llangynidr, Breconshire, April 2006.
Some evacuations were extremely successful. On October 23 1940 Mrs Constance Spray, from Stockwell was billeted at Worcester Cottage, Llangynidr, the home of Mrs Gladys Gibbs, with her three children Bernard (13), Gerald (8) and Margaret (6). They stayed for more than 3 years; Mrs Spray often being in charge of the house when none of the Gibbs family was present. Mutual respect was quickly established. On November 14 Sheila Gibbs, Gladys Gibbs' daughter in law, wrote in her diary: 'It was a mystery to me how those two boys can get up in the mornings without disturbing me as my door is open and I hear every cry of Jonathan (her 3 month old baby)'. The Sprays were Roman Catholics but Margaret was allowed by her mother to go to Sunday School with the Powell children from down the lane. Bernard was taught to fish for trout by the bailiff, Tom Edwards, and developed an interest in the sport that lasted throughout life. Mr Spray, who was in the Auxiliary Fire Service, came for occasional weekends from London. However, as time went on he became involved with another woman and when Mrs Spray left Llangynidr, it was in an unsuccessful attempt to save her marriage. After the War, occasional contacts between the families were maintained and as recently as December 2005, Margaret visited Worcester Cottage to see the house and the Norway maple planted by her family near the river and known to generations of Gibbises as 'the Spray tree'.
- ⁶¹ *Brecon and Radnor Express*, 18 January 1945.
- ⁶² *Ibid.*, 31 May 1945.

BUILDING A SIGNIFICANT REGIONAL ART COLLECTION:
THE VISUAL ARTS AT BRECKNOCK MUSEUM & ART GALLERY,
1992–2005

Introduction

After 1992, when David Moore became curator, there was a determined effort to develop a public art gallery at Brecon's Brecknock Museum and to enhance markedly the regional significance of its visual art collection. He believed that artworks were – and should be developed as – an integral part of the Museum's collection and activities. It was hoped that visitors initially attracted to local history, art or natural history would encounter, experience and enjoy the others.

The development of the visual arts at Brecknock Museum was not the only activity in this period. The local history collections were greatly enriched. An extensive gallery exploring aspects of Brecknock Townlife was created. The Assize Court was reinterpreted. Improvements were made to the accessibility of the building for disabled people. A strong supportive relationship with the Brecknock Society & Museum Friends was formed. Detailed general reports on the Museum may be found in the respective editions of *Brycheiniog*.¹ These developments were inter-related with the development of the visual arts which was of deep concern due to its relative neglect. This initiative was strongly supported by John Greatorex, the County officer responsible for arts and museums during much of this period until his retirement in 2001.

In a little over a decade Brecknock Museum achieved a reputation as a place to experience the visual arts. In parallel with exhibitions – which strongly featured artists working in Wales – the Museum's collection of visual art and culture was greatly enhanced. It evolved, in a relatively short period, into a regionally focused collection of national significance.

This account, which is based partly on a lecture given by David Moore to the Contemporary Art Society for Wales at Brecon Guildhall on 26th July 2003, explores the process by which this occurred.

The Background: Visual Art Collecting at Brecknock Museum, 1928–1992

The Museum collection, founded in 1928 by the Brecknock Society, was transferred to the care of Breconshire County Council in 1950 and, in turn, to Powys County Council in 1974. The Brecknock Society has, understandably, kept a close and highly supportive interest in the Museum.

Brecknock Museum's collections prior to 1992 are rich in the visual culture of the region. The visual strengths of the collection to this date include Early

Christian monuments, vernacular furniture, prints and photography. There are also quilts, samplers and shawls and outstanding seventeenth century raised embroidery. There is a notable collection of Welsh love-spoons. Present, too, are works by artisan painters such as signs, early nineteenth century Brecon street scenes and portraits like those of Colonel and Mrs Chabert dating from the eighteenth century.²

As the Museum evolved visual art collecting might be characterized as having been more of a passive than a pro-active activity, subject to occasional gifts, bequests and chance purchases. In the forty-six years between 1928 – when Brecknock Museum was founded – and 1974, when it was transferred to the Shire Hall building, ‘artworks’ were accessioned at a rate of roughly ten per year.³

During this period significant art acquisitions included a 1795 pen and ink sketch of *Brecon across the Usk* by Sir Richard Colt-Hoare, busts by the nineteenth century Brecon born sculptor John Evan Thomas, nineteenth century watercolours of Llansanffraid church before it was remodelled, 1870s photographs by Robert Crawshay and watercolours by Sam Garratt including views of Llangors Lake and the Maiden’s Stone Aberysgir. Many late eighteenth and nineteenth century topographical prints were acquired featuring ruins, waterfalls and churches as well as images of Sarah Siddons in memorable theatrical roles. There were also portraits, some of which were unidentified, and accomplished watercolours of wildflowers. An oil painting was purchased which had been attributed to Thomas Jones and identified as Llangors Lake.

When, in 1974, the Museum was relocated to the old Brecknock Shire Hall the building included a number of nineteenth century portraits of local gentry, members of parliament and justices of the peace. Artworks continued to be donated including an early nineteenth century oil portrait of John Lloyd Watkins of Penoyre. An imposing Victorian bronze sculpture of *Boadicea and her Daughters* was transferred to the Museum from within the County Council in 1979. This may be a work which was once held by Birmingham Museum & Art Gallery.⁴ The sculptor, John Thomas, seems to have been confused – understandably – with John Evan Thomas. More etchings, drawings, watercolours and oil paintings by Sam Garratt were donated.

Although art accessions in the eighteen years between 1974 and 1992 were few – they averaged no more than three per year – they included worthwhile and even significant items. A 1920s wood engraving *Madonna & Child* by Eric Gill and an oil on canvas of *Mellte Falls* by Sam Garratt were purchased, the latter by the Brecknock Society. Potential donors were clearly feeling well disposed towards the Museum because a watercolour of *Brecon Castle and Bridge* by William Turner of Oxford was bequeathed. In 1985, too, Jane Evan-Thomas of Tunbridge Wells donated the important *River Scene on the Wye* by Thomas Jones, c.1775–6. This

was included in the 2003 exhibition *Thomas Jones: An Artist Rediscovered* at the National Museum Cardiff which toured to Manchester's Whitworth Art Gallery.⁵ In the early 1990s Professor Gwynne Jones bequeathed a collection of mostly topographical paintings including *Waterfall on the River Neath* by James Burrell Smith, watercolours of *Snowdon* by John Varley, *Llanthony Abbey* by Lord Aylesford and small watercolours and etchings of north Wales castles by John Cotman. Also included was a large oil portrait attributed to John Riley and identified, intriguingly, as Nell Gwyn.⁶

Developing the Visual Arts at Brecknock Museum: Exhibitions & Collecting, 1992–1999

David Moore was appointed as curator in 1992, having worked previously in Pembrokeshire for Dyfed Museum Service. Although very much concerned with local history he also had a strong interest in modern and contemporary art from Wales. He felt that the visual arts at Brecon should be developed. There had been relatively little concern to display or collect contemporary art associated with Brecknockshire. The town, surrounded by visually outstanding landscapes and located in a National Park, was well placed to be a focus for the visual arts. An art collection here had the potential to reflect, from the eighteenth century to the present day, the dramatic scenery of the region.

A programme of exhibitions was introduced which strongly featured the visual arts. It included contemporary artists from the immediate region as well as visually interesting social history exhibitions. The large gallery to the left of the Museum entrance hall was converted into a dedicated exhibition space. It had previously contained displays of costume, ceramics and love-spoons as well as items from the art collection. There had, of course, been exhibitions – including art exhibitions – at the Museum but these had been infrequent. What was new was a planned programme of exhibitions in a dedicated space.

The first art exhibition to be shown in the newly designated space was Megan Jones's *Brecknock Landscape* which opened in Autumn 1992. Four works were purchased from this Ystradgynlais artist's exhibition for the collection. These included a striking oil landscape painting *Fan Hir* (Plate 1) and a loose canvas wall hanging *Scwd Einion Gam*. This began a pattern of acquiring artwork of regional significance from exhibitions at the Museum.

Strong catalysts to this process were 1993 celebrations of Brecon's 900th anniversary as well as the 10th Brecon Jazz Festival. Additional funding had been made available for these projects. *Brecon in Focus: Local People, Places & Events in Old Photographs* was an exhibition of photographic enlargements prepared by the staff with support from the Council of Museums in Wales. Derived largely from the Museum's collection it was expanded into a popular book, *Brecon in Old Photographs*.⁷

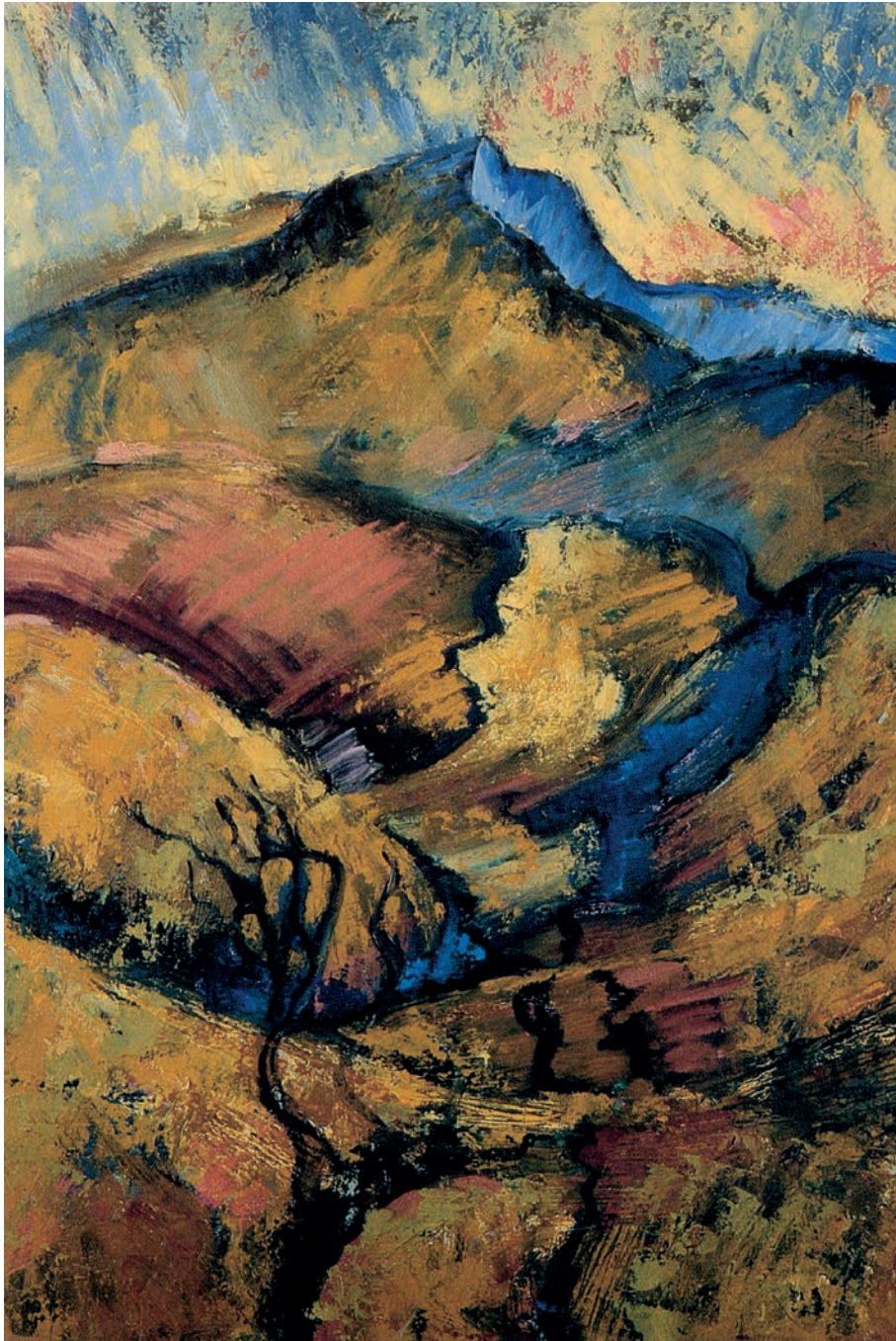


Plate 1 Megan Jones, *Fan Hir*, Oil on board, 1989



Plate 2 Susan Milne, *Landmark II*, Woodcut, 1984

At the end of the summer an elaborate exhibition *The Jazz Route to Brecon* had been installed in the Gallery. Devised by Branwen Iorwerth and Jed Williams of Brecon Jazz as a walk-through potted history of jazz from New Orleans to Brecon, it was funded by the Development Board for Rural Wales and imaginatively designed by Graeme Galvin.⁸ Both exhibitions raised expectations of the Museum. Both were shown again at Brecon and *The Jazz Route* was, in addition, exhibited in Cardiff.

In 1993 two contemporary art exhibitions were also held at the Museum. In the autumn *Roy Powell: Recent Paintings* was shown. The artist lived in Brecon and had taught art at the High School. His quietly enthusiastic support for the art exhibition programme was encouraging. Two of his *Vanitas* canvases were purchased from the show for the collection. In July a small room to the right of the entrance hall and which was being used for storage was cleared to create an additional exhibition space. An exhibition by Shirley Jones, an artist living in Llanhamlach, was opened there at the end of July. *The Written Word, The Printed Image: Ten Years of the Red Hen Pres* ran alongside *The Jazz Route*. This was the first of several collaborations with Brycheiniog Association for the Arts (BAFA). The Association followed it, in 1994, with exhibitions of work by potter and painter Sue Varley and, in 1995, of the artist Jean Drew. Some years later BAFA ceased to exist and its small collection of artworks was presented to the Museum. Funds transferred from it to The Brecknock Society & Museum Friends were also used to acquire artworks for the Museum.

Both an exhibition programme and an art gallery had been established at Brecknock Museum by the end of 1993. Many lively exhibitions of contemporary art followed as artists from all over Wales enthusiastically embraced the possibilities of the fine public gallery space. The Arts Council of Wales, through its officer Richard Cox, supported selected exhibitions between 1994 and 1998 and this was also very encouraging.

A tradition was established of holding widely promoted formal openings of exhibitions with guest speakers. These have included politicians, councillors, arts administrators, jazz musicians and celebrities such as historian Count Nikolai Tolstoy-Miloslavsky, who opened Ivor Davies's exhibition *Native Subjects* in 1995. Artists included Jonah Jones (*Bert Isaac's Retrospective*, 1996) and Will Roberts (*Karel Lek's Jazz Drawings*, 1997). The openings were popular social occasions and helped to raise the Museum's visual art profile.

A significant milestone was passed with *The Brecon Column & Other Works*, a 1994 exhibition by Knighton artist Islwyn Watkins. This was notable for its uncompromising introduction to both staff and visitors of abstract assemblage art. It was the first time, too, that installation art had been shown at the Museum. A column of painted wood was inserted between floor and ceiling. Visitors were

invited to select pieces of wood and other objects to add to the construction. The exhibition attracted sponsorship from a local builder's merchant. It also began a creative partnership between the Museum and Islwyn Watkins which led to two further exhibitions. The Museum bought two small abstract constructions from this first exhibition. It would eventually acquire a large collection of the artist's work.

Between 1993 and 1999 exhibitions averaged eight a year and most of these were of work by contemporary artists from Wales. Many of the artists shown lived in Brecknockshire or surrounding areas and this established a close link with the local artistic community. They included Shirley Jones, Susan Milne, Meg Stevens, Tessa Waite, Bert Isaac, Robert Macdonald, Geoffrey and Sarah Bradford, Denis Mathews and Panico Theodosiou. Significant artists from other parts of Wales also exhibited and they included Ray Howard-Jones, George Little, Ken Elias, Glyn Morgan, Peter Bailey, Richard Cox and Ivor Davies, the latter being the first artist to have a catalogue which, with few resources, was produced in-house.⁹ Significant artist groups in Wales sought to exhibit, notably The Welsh Group and The Welsh Watercolour Society, both of which held two exhibitions at the Museum in this period. In addition there was an exhibition by the Threads of Colour Art Group organized by Eric Williams from Brecon's John Hughes Centre. After Theatr Brycheiniog and its gallery space opened on 17th April 1997 the possibility of showing a large exhibition in two close venues was explored. The first was *Analogue* which featured the work of Richard Cox and Japanese artists Hideo Furuta and Yumiko Inagaki. A few year's later The Welsh Group also exhibited in both galleries.

Art exhibitions were interspersed with social history exhibitions. These tended to involve more work for the Museum staff. Some, however, were organized by members of The Brecknock Society & Museum Friends. A notable example from this period was *Old Brecknockshire Farmhouses: Thirty Years On* (1998) which was organized by Pamela Redwood.¹⁰ Also shown at this time were *The Eye in the Landscape: Wells of Brecon & Radnor* (1997), organized by Jan Shivel, and the hugely successful *Jen Jones's Welsh Quilts* (1999).

Between 1992 and 1999 contemporary art acquisitions from the old county were strongly linked to exhibitions at the Museum. The collecting policy was to obtain 'artworks created within, inspired by and providing insights into the landscape, people and culture of Brecknockshire and its environs up to the present day'.¹¹ Many landscapes were acquired including: a drawing, *Cradle*, from Susan Milne's *Black Mountains Drawings* (1994); an acrylic, *October Storm*, from Bert Isaac's *Retrospective* (1996); a watercolour, *Down The Parks Track to Abersefin*, from Robert Macdonald's *Retrospective* (1997) and an oil on canvas, *Mayshade*, from Jeff Nuttall's *Landscapes* (1997). Artworks have occasionally been acquired from outside the region through a bequest or after an artist has exhibited. These have, invariably, enhanced the collection.

Post-modernist works of contemporary art acquired from exhibitions at the Museum included Glyn-neath artist Ken Elias's acrylic *Going Home: Pictures VII* from *Going Home: Paintings* (1997). They also included the first in a number of love-spoon inspired artworks – *Still Life in Wales After the Referendum: The Love-spoon*, a boxed assemblage by Peter Bailey from his exhibition *Celebration Dance & Other Sculpture* (1999).

The *Jazz Route to Brecon* inspired an annual Brecon Jazz Festival Exhibition. This was advertised prominently in the Festival programme. Sometimes promotional banners for it were hung between the columns of the Museum portico. The openings of these exhibitions were particularly lively, usually with jazz bands. Artists who exhibited during the Festival in these years included Paul Peter Piech (1995) whose politically charged and visually exciting posters attracted much attention. He returned the following year with more jazz-related work. Other artists who showed work during the Festival were Diana Golledge (1994 and 1995), Valerie Coffin Price (1996), Karel Lek (1997), William Brown, Tony Goble and Glenys Cour as *Jazz Trio* (1998) and Valerie Ganz (1999). The South Wales Potters also exhibited *Cool Blues, Hot Reds* in 1999.

Images of musicians who have appeared at Brecon Jazz Festival were acquired. A drawing by Valerie Ganz of saxophonist Gerry Mulligan, which had been exhibited at Brecon Library during the 1992 Festival, was the first artwork bought for the Museum by the curator soon after his appointment. Works obtained from Museum exhibitions included a photograph of trumpeter Harry 'Sweets' Edison by Gena Davies, an acrylic of Gerry Mulligan by Valerie Ganz worked from the earlier sketch (with funds transferred from BAFA), a drawing of vibraphone player Lionel Hampton by Diana Golledge, a mixed media painting of Trevor Watts's Moiré Music Drum Orchestra by Lucilla Jones and a watercolour of Keith Pendlebury by Karel Lek. An autographed doodle by Festival patron, fisherman and local resident George Melly was obtained in a local charity auction.

Significant earlier works reflecting aspects of social history were also acquired between 1992 and 1999. A distinguished 1831 portrait by William Salter of the prosperous Llanfaes maltster William Hughes was bought in 1992 with a grant from The Pilgrim Trust. Oil Portraits dating from c.1730 of the Bailiff of Brecon Gabriel Powell and his wife Mary attracted funding from the MLA / V&A Purchase Grant Fund in 1994 and were conserved. These found a prominent place, along with other artworks and visual treasures from the early days of the Museum, in the Brecknock Townlife Gallery which opened on 22nd March 1996. This returned the top floor of the Museum to public access and doubled the number of exhibits on display. Such works continued to be acquired and included an eighteenth century view of Crickhowell by Sir Richard Colt-Hoare which was transferred in 1997 from the County Library Service.



Plate 3 The Art Gallery after the 1997 refurbishment showing Paintings & Sculpture from the Collection in 2004.

In 1997 the Art Gallery was refurbished, as part of an extensive package of redevelopment at the Museum, with external funding from the Heritage Lottery Fund, the European Regional Development Fund and the Wales Tourist Board (Plate 3).¹² The original ceiling was revealed, raising the height of the gallery substantially and restoring the original elegant proportions of the room. It was re-clad with painted boards, a great improvement on the original hessian covered chipboard. High quality gallery lighting was installed enabling each work to be individually lit. Lifts and ramps also made access possible for physically disabled people to all floors of the Museum. The Art Gallery reopened on 5th April 1997 with a challenging exhibition of landscape paintings and reliefs by 1960s *enfant terrible* Jeff Nuttall with whom the Museum, in his latter years, was to enjoy a highly creative relationship.

Recent improvements at the Museum had not escaped the notice of the *Brecon & Radnor Express* which noted that it 'has become a bustling centre not only for the area's history but for Welsh art, crafts and exhibitions.'¹³ Consequently, in November 1997, artists felt strongly enough to express their concern about the detrimental effect of recently introduced admission charges. Artist Robert MacDonald insisted that 'The development of an art exhibition programme of

national importance has been a remarkable achievement of the past few years.¹⁴ Ivor Davies, Vice President of the Royal Cambrian Academy, pointed out that ‘The curator’s policy of encouraging and revealing artists creates an investment in living culture, education, employment and, in the long term, financial results.’¹⁵ David Tinker, chairman of The Welsh Group, noted that ‘The museum and gallery has a growing reputation for excellence which needs to be encouraged and supported.’¹⁶

In April 1998, with the intention of further enhancing the collection, John Grotorex and David Moore visited Cardiff’s Albany Gallery to purchase, fortified with an Italian lunch and wine, two small ink and watercolour studies by Josef Herman – *Miner Resting* and *The Village*. These were the first of what was to become a significant collection of the artist’s work. A visit to Sotheby’s first ‘all Wales’ auction by the curator in October 1999 led to the acquisition of *The Mountain & Lyn y Fan Fach*, a 1970s work by Michael Edmonds. The artist had been a founder member of Group 56 Wales.¹⁷ To provide a focus for a very different aspect of the Museum’s visual art collection, a particularly large example of a nineteenth century chip-carved beechwood love-spoon was acquired at auction. This had probably been made as an *cisteddfod* exhibit and it attracted a grant from the MLA / V&A Purchase Grant Fund.

Prints were acquired, too, building a significant and useful collection demonstrating a range of techniques. A strong 1930s wood engraving of the Usk bridge at Brecon by Cyril Saunders Spackman was donated. Mezzotints and aquatints from Shirley Jones’s artist books, a drypoint and linocut by Robert MacDonald and a variety of prints by Susan Milne including a woodcut and monoprint were acquired (Plate 2).¹⁸ At the end of 1999 a significant group of Capel-y-ffin wood engravings and an etching were purchased from Wolsley Fine Arts in London. These were by David Jones and Eric Gill from 1924–8 and Edgar Holloway from 1948.¹⁹

The return to Brecknockshire in June 1999 of John Evan Thomas and William Meredyth Thomas’s 1848 bronze sculpture *The Death of Tewdrig* gave a dramatic boost to the collection. It had been displayed in the entrance hall of the National Museum Cardiff since the days of Brecknockshire County Council. Peter Lord has demonstrated that ‘it carries a national subtext of great importance beneath the simple patriotic story of the Welsh king slain at Mathern in defence of his country’.²⁰ Victorian sculpture had once been very unfashionable but the best of it is now admired. Both *Tewdrig* and, remarkably, *Boadicea* are rare surviving examples of Victorian, idealistic, historical sculpture.²¹

By 1999 the art exhibition programme, the art collection and, healthily, the wide range of public responses to it – from the diffident to the enthusiastic – had become an integral part of the Museum’s activities, way of life and *raison d’être*.

Between 1992 and 1999 around ninety artworks had been acquired at a rate of approximately eleven a year. The name 'Brecknock Museum & Art Gallery' was adopted as reflecting better the institution's dual role. A significant period of consolidation would follow in the new Millennium.

Brecknock Museum Art Trust's Impact on Art Collecting at Brecknock Museum & Art Gallery, 2000–2005

In 1999 Llangynidr resident William Gibbs, impressed by the quality of the art exhibitions and by the evident desire to form a good art collection at the Museum, suggested that a Trust might be established to support art collecting and to help make the collection more accessible. With the full support of John Greatorex, Brecknock Museum Art Trust was established in 2000. The County Council's solicitors drew up the appropriate document. It was registered with the Charity Commission and trustees were appointed.

The Trust was to have a profound effect upon art collecting at the Museum. Significant artworks had been acquired before and, on occasion, the Museum had obtained grants or other assistance. It had been, however, like most regional museums, severely restricted by what it could afford given dwindling funding for purchases.

The Museum was now able to acquire significant artworks outright. The Trust's first acquisition was *Doppelgänger*, a 1998 oil on canvas by Sarah Snazell (1965–1999) (Plate 4). The drama and intrigue of the painting were particularly poignant because the artist had died of cancer in her thirties shortly after completing the work.

Many significant contemporary acquisitions followed which have substantially enriched the collection and which were unlikely otherwise to have been acquired. The majority of artworks continued to be bought from the artists' exhibitions at the Museum. Examples are Niel Bally's acrylic *Ravine*, Veronica Gibson's oil on board *Allotment Snow* (Plate 5a), Arthur Giardelli's curled paper assemblage *Tide Coming In*, Tony Goble's watercolour *Beacon & Bards*, Clive Hicks-Jenkins's drawing *The Mari Lwyd Approaches* and Sue Hiley Harris's woven linen sculpture *Waves*. Others are: *First Snow*, an oil painting by Bill Mills; *Limestone Anatomy: Twyn Du*, a watercolour and gouache by Robert Newell (Plate 5b); *Studies for an Unpublished Novel* and *Country Schoolchildren*, watercolours by Jeff Nuttall; *Beacons from Penlan*, an oil landscape by Roy Powell; *Nine Vague Allotments*, a collage by Matthew Richardson; *Sky, Rain, Mountain, River*, a graphite drawing by David Tress; and two of Michael Strang's 1970s Llanelly Hill oil paintings. Other works acquired from Museum exhibitions include artist books from The Old Stile Press and significant works by Laurie Williams and Ken Elias. Many works, however, were now bought from exhibitions outside the Museum or directly from artists.



Plate 4 Sarah Snazell's *Doppelgänger*, Oil on canvas, 1998. This was the first work to be purchased by Brecknock Museum Art Trust, in 2000. *Courtesy of the Estate of Sarah Snazell.*



Plate 5 Contemporary landscapes purchased by Brecknock Museum Art Trust from Museum exhibitions: (a) Veronica Gibson's *Allotment Snow*, Oil on board, 2000, and (b) Robert Newell's *Limestone Anatomy: Twyn Du*, Watercolour & gouache, 2003.

Examples include Ivor Davies's paintings *Taranis* and *Mebyd Mabon*.²² They also include John Uzzell Edward's oil painting *Bird Lives 1*, a heady cocktail of jazz and Celtic imagery, as well as Shirley Jones's artist book *Chwedlau*, which explores Welsh myths, legends and folk-lore. Other works to have been acquired in this way include drawings, sculpture, screenprints and mezzotints by Radovan Kraguly, Ann Catrin Evans's forged steel *Love Weapons*, sculpture by Richard Renshaw, a painting by Islwyn Watkins and a large drawing on canvas by Pip Woolf. The Art Trust has, in addition, commissioned work, notably two *Welsh Mountain Sheep* thistledown sculptures from Sally Matthews (Plate 6).²³

Older works purchased outright from galleries by the Trust include Hendrick Frans De Cort's 1790s pencil & ink wash *Limestone Rocks, Pontneddfechan*, identified by the writer after much fieldwork as Bwa Maen, a curious geological structure by the Sychryd cascades south of Craig y Dinas which had been much discussed at the time.²⁴ John Piper's c.1941 neo-Romantic watercolour *Llanthony Abbey* was a distinguished addition (Plate 7a).²⁵ Three of Edgar Holloway's 1943 Capel-y-ffin watercolours were bought from his touring exhibition which was shown at the Museum.²⁶ Paintings and drawings by Reg Gammon, from when he lived and farmed at Capel-y-ffin between 1939 and 1962, were acquired from his family following a chance encounter with the writer in Somerset.²⁷

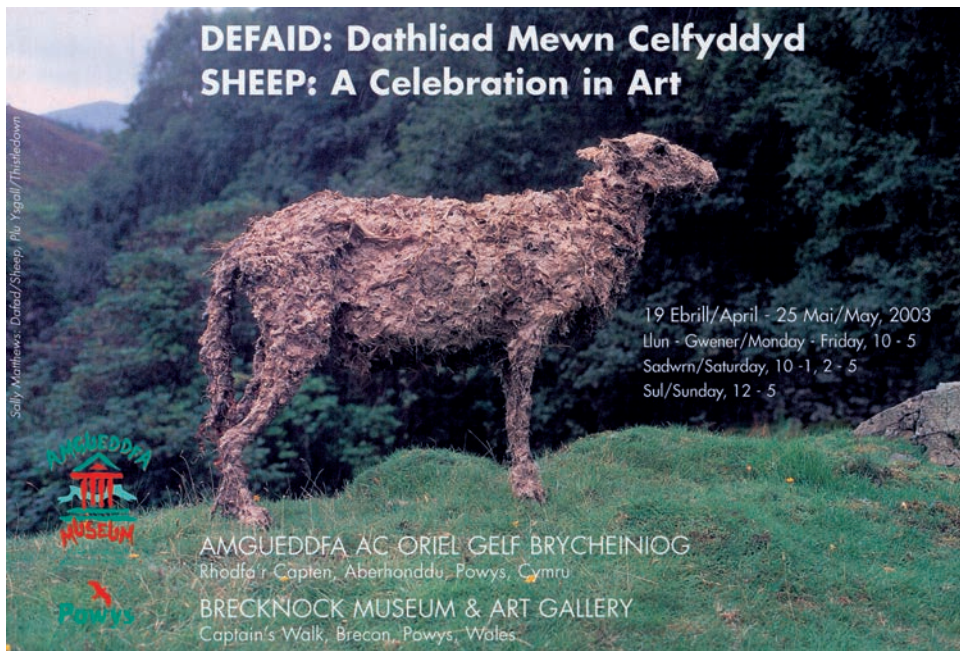


Plate 6 Exhibition Poster for *Sheep: A Celebration in Art* (2003) which followed in the aftermath of Foot & Mouth Disease. It shows one of Sally Matthews' *Welsh Mountain Sheep* commissioned by Brecknock Museum Art Trust.



Plate 7 Neo-Romantic Works purchased by – or with assistance from – Brecknock Museum Art Trust: (a) John Piper's *Llanthony Abbey*, Watercolour, c.1941, and (b) Graham Sutherland's *Fallen Tree Against Sunset, Crickhowell* Watercolour, 1940 (The latter with a grant from the MLA / V&A Purchase Grant Fund, 2000).

Courtesy of the Estates of John Piper and Graham Sutherland.



Plate 8 Josef Herman's *Figures in a Street*, Ink & Watercolour, c.1950, purchased by Brecknock Museum Art Trust at auction in 2001. *Courtesy of the Estate of Josef Herman.*

Bidding in auctions became a regular activity and works obtained in this way include: Michael Angelo Rooker's 1790s watercolour *Usk Bridge, Brecon*; an early nineteenth century watercolour, *Entrance, Porth yr Ogof*, attributed to G. Douglas; Joseph Murray Ince's 1848 watercolour *Newton, Brecon*; Reg Gammon's 1940s *Llanthony Abbey & Tom Lewis's Farm*; Josef Herman's c.1950 watercolours *Figures in a Street* (Plate 8), *Miners at Ystradgynlais* and *Mining Landscape*; and Glyn Morgan's 1990 oil on canvas *Llanthony Valley*.

Works were also acquired from fund-raising auctions at the Museum. They included Sally Matthews' 1993 varnish and charcoal drawing *Lying Down Sow*, Veronica Gibson's 1999 oil on board *Cwm Eira*, Valerie Ganz's charcoal and watercolour *Trio of Tower Men* and Panico Theodosiou's Llangors stone sculpture *Fish Form III*.

Bidding at auction – in the nature of the activity – did not always go according to plan. The Museum was outbid for a Ravilious watercolour of Capel-y-ffin, a John Piper oil painting of Llanthony Abbey and a Graham Sutherland watercolour near Crickhowell. This meant that grants carefully applied for were no longer usable.

The Trust's most significant impact upon the quality of the art collection has been in providing match-funding which has been used to attract large grants. When applying for grants regional museums and galleries are normally restricted by not having access to the proportion of local funding which is a necessary condition for receiving grants from national funding bodies. With support from the Art Trust, therefore, Brecknock Museum & Art Gallery's ability to represent work by significant artists who have worked in its region has been raised to a previously unattainable level. This was not achieved without a great deal of research to locate relevant works and to prepare grant applications.

The first work to be acquired in which the Art Trust provided match-funding for a national grant was Graham Sutherland's 1940 neo-Romantic watercolour *Fallen Tree Against Sunset, Crickhowell* (Plate 7b).²⁸ Funding was obtained to buy this in 2000 from the MLA / V&A Purchase Grant Fund. It is a reminder that Sutherland's visits to Wales were not only to Pembrokeshire. A group of three notable watercolours by David Jones from Capel-y-ffin, 1924–8, were acquired in 2001: *Petra Gill, Capel-y-ffin; Orchard, Capel-y-ffin* and *Christ in the Garden* (Plate 9). Funding was obtained from both The Art Fund & MLA / V&A Fund.²⁹ Josef Herman's 1968 oil on canvas *Miner with Dog* was acquired in 2003 with support from the MLA / V&A Purchase Grant Fund and The Derek Williams Trust. Herman's iconic 1949 oil on canvas *Pen-y-bont Inn, Ystradgynlais*, depicting the inn where he lived when he arrived in Ystradgynlais in 1944, was obtained in 2004 with funding from The Art Fund and MLA / V&A Purchase Grant Fund.³⁰ Along with smaller studies these major Herman oil paintings have ensured that the Museum holds one of the most important public collections of the artist's work created in and inspired by his stay in Ystradgynlais from 1944 to 1955.³¹ Jones's distinguished 1926 watercolour *Y Twmpa – Capel* was obtained in 2005 with grants from The Art Fund & MLA / V&A Purchase Grant Fund. Eric Ravilious's 1938 watercolour *The Waterwheel* was bought in 2005 following a chance discovery of it in a London gallery by the writer who recognised it as having featured in a major retrospective of Ravilious's work at the Imperial War Museum in 2003–4.³² The substantial funds needed to purchase it were eventually raised with support from The Art Fund, MLA / V&A Purchase Grant Fund, The Usk Valley Trust and The Brecknock Society & Museum Friends with monies raised from an auction of work submitted by artists from Wales.³³

In 2004–6 the Art Trust commissioned photographer Bernard Mitchell to photograph – in their working environment – thirty artists and sculptors whose work was represented in the collection. An exhibition, *Artists in Focus*, of a selection of these was held in 2005. Artworks from the Museum's collection were shown alongside a photograph of the respective artist.



Plate 9 David Jones's *Christ in the Garden*, Watercolour, 1925, purchased with funding from Brecknock Museum Art Trust and grants from The Art Fund and MLA / V&A Purchase Grant Fund in 2001.

Courtesy of the Estate of David Jones.

A recent project of the Art Trust has been to commission artworks for The Beacons Way Art Trail.³⁴ Eight artists were selected to create low relief plaques which will be set into stones, one for each day of an eight day walk through Brecon Beacons National Park. Preparatory works submitted for the project are now in the Museum's collection.

The Brecknock Museum Art Trust, between 2000 and 2005, enabled Brecknock Museum & Art Gallery, through whole or partial funding, to acquire ninety-four high quality artworks or groups of artworks which, in all probability, would not otherwise have been obtainable. Of these it provided the match-funding to acquire eight exceptionally significant works: two Josef Herman oil paintings and six watercolours, four of which were by David Jones and the other two by Graham Sutherland and Eric Ravilious.

Other Artwork Collecting & Exhibitions at Brecknock Museum & Art Gallery, 2000–2005

Alongside the massive contribution of Brecknock Museum Art Trust, between 2000 and 2005, to building a regional art collection, another sixty artworks were acquired directly by the Museum. Donations and occasional bequests continued and these were often complementary to works acquired by or with Trust funds.

Some works were donated largely as a consequence of a purchase funded by the Trust. Unframed drawings by Reg Gammon and a small ink drawing, *David Jones* by Arthur Giardelli, were obtained in this way. Three of Jeff Nuttall's *Black Mountains Reliefs* were donated following purchases of his watercolours by the Trust from his 2004 commemorative exhibition. The Art Fund transferred a bequest of *Horses in a Meadow*, a 1926 watercolour by David Jones, to the Museum because it was aware, following numerous grant applications, of the Museum's interest in the artist's work of that date.

Donations have, of course, been made for other reasons. They include works of topographical or biographical interest including a nineteenth century oil on canvas by J. E. Breun of *Adelina Patti Watching Nicolini Landing a Salmon at Pont Pantyscallog*, Walter Goddard's c.1900 oil on canvas *Brecon from Pen y Crug*, a 1970s drawing and an oil painting by Ystradgynlais artist and coalminer Cyril Ifold and a 1927 naïve watercolour *Swansea Canal near Awobrey Arms*, *Ystradgynlais* by Jack Phillips. Watercolours by Sam Garratt have continued to be presented to the Museum. Huw Parsons donated his meticulous 1997 painting *Building Theatr Brycheiniog & Canal Basin*. Two of Sally Matthews' remarkably life-like 1998 rabbit paintings were presented to the collection in memory of Gaby Steffens.

Two artworks were passed to the Museum by The Contemporary Art Society for Wales in 2000. The first was Bert Isaac's 1953 ink and watercolour *Landscape With Mortar Mill* which provides a useful perspective on the Museum's later

work by this significant Abergavenny artist. The second was Islwyn Watkins's 1999 construction *Seacock, Peacow*, the largest abstract assemblage work in the collection.

The transfer to Brecknock Museum & Gallery in 2002 of a gift of 29 works from the Arts Council of Wales Collection consolidated the significance of the regional art collection at Brecon. The whole of the Arts Council's collection was being dispersed. The works were carefully selected for their relevance to the region and to the collection. The addition of the 1954 oil painting by Martin Bloch *Welsh Village* (Plate 10), probably painted in Ystradgynlais, and Will Roberts's 1951 oil painting *Cwmgiedd*, were particularly significant. Other artists



Plate 10 Martin Bloch's *Welsh Village*, Oil on canvas, 1954. This is one of the artworks gifted by The Arts Council of Wales in 2002.

Courtesy of the Estate of Martin Bloch.

new to the collection were Ronald Lowe, David Hurn, Robert Alwyn Hughes, Mary Lloyd Jones, Jane Joseph and David Millward. The gift also included two further works each by David Jones, Josef Herman, Bert Isaac, Ken Elias and Radovan Kraguly. The largest number of additional works by one artist, however, was from Islwyn Watkins with three early prints and two assemblages, ensuring that the Museum held the largest public collection of his work.

Other works were purchased to complement the collection and many of these were from Museum exhibitions. They included love-spoon inspired box sculpture by Peter Bailey, abstract works on paper by Islwyn Watkins and remarkable drawings by Susan Milne, Bill Mills, Antonia Spowers and Pip Woolf.

The exhibitions which have accompanied this serious collecting activity averaged about eleven a year in the period 2000–5. Full colour bilingual annual programme leaflets continued to be produced, a slender new style being adopted in 2002. Well over half of the solo exhibitions shown at the Museum were of work by artists living in Brecknockshire and its immediate surroundings. Such artists included Antonia Spowers, Veronica Gibson, Marcelle Davies, Sue Hiley Harris, Niel Bally, Jeff Nuttall and Roy Powell. Of the others most were from Wales and many, such as Bill Mills, Clive Hicks-Jenkins, Edgar Holloway, Ivor Davies and Michael Strang produced work which was, at least in part, a response to aspects of the region's landscape. Some, like Peter Bailey, William Brown and Iwan Bala, responded to the Museum's collection of love-spoons. Other artists from Wales have included Mary Fogg, Charles Burton, Jean Walcot, Dan Llywelyn Hall and, shown together, Bim and Arthur Giardelli. The latter exhibition was also shown at Oriol Davies, Newtown. Another notable exhibition was *The Old Stile Press: Working with Artists in Wales*. Group shows in these years included The Watercolour Society of Wales, The Makers' Guild in Wales and The Welsh Group. If an external agent was involved it was, occasionally, possible to produce catalogues. This occurred for *David Tress: Drawings* and *Robert Newell: Environment into Landscape*.³⁵

A particularly memorable art exhibition was *Merz Jam* (Plate 11), an installation created by artists Jeff Nuttall and Islwyn Watkins during the 2000 Brecon Jazz Festival. The work, made partly from found materials, completely filled the Art Gallery with a walk-through environment. Saxophonist Lol Coxhill performed free jazz improvisations in the space during the Festival. Both artists had been actively involved in creating environments and happenings in London during the 1960s. Jeff Nuttall, indeed, is regarded, along with Mark Boyle and John Latham, as one of the most important English mixed-media artists of the early 1960s to have worked in London.³⁶ After Nuttall died in early 2004 a commemorative exhibition, *The Art of Jeff Nuttall, 1933–2004*, was scheduled to coincide with the 2004 Jazz Festival. It was opened by Molly Parkin, the well-known fashion writer, and attracted wide interest.

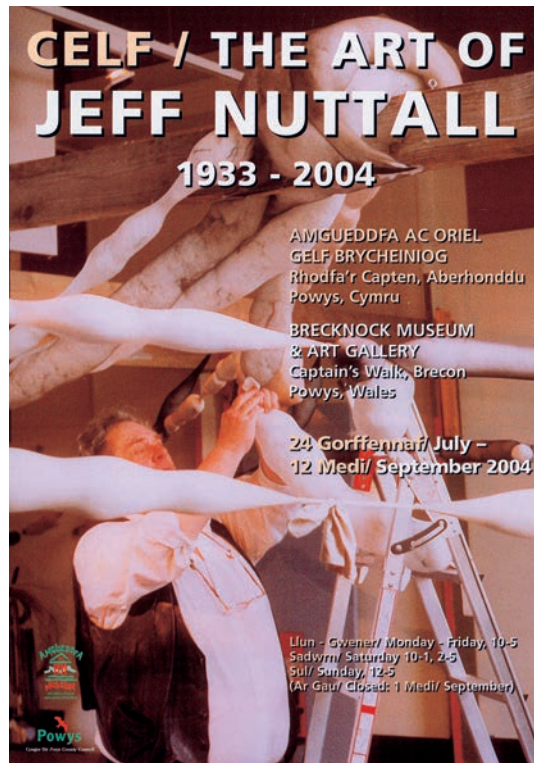


Plate 11 Exhibition poster for *The Art of Jeff Nuttall, 1933–2004* (2004) showing the artist working on *Merz Jam* which he created in 2000 with Islwyn Watkins in the Gallery.

A successful group exhibition which seemed to capture the mood of the time was *Sheep: A Celebration in Art* (2003) (Plate 6). This was shown in the aftermath of an outbreak of Foot and Mouth Disease which had a devastating impact upon the region. Several works were purchased by the Art Trust from this including Iwan Bala's mixed-media painting *Monument*, Clive Hicks-Jenkins's monoprint *The Ghost of a Sheep*, Marcelle Davies's embroidery *Foot & Mouth 1* and Sue Hiley Harris's woven sculpture *Folds*.

Exhibitions derived from the Museum's expanding collection were also now possible. The Art Trust was particularly anxious that works acquired should be seen by the public. Sometimes these exhibitions were themed. Examples from 2004 were: *Prints & Drawings from the Collection* and *Paintings & Sculpture from the Collection* (Plate 3). These were an opportunity for people to enjoy what had been collected and they pointed the way forward to a time when there might be a more permanent display of the Museum's art collection.

Social history exhibitions with a strong visual content continued to be programmed alongside art exhibitions. Examples curated by Brecknock Society

members were: *Welsh Comic Postcards: Brynach Parri's Collection* (2000), *Brecon Theatre: An Historical Celebration* (2001–2) by Sister Bonaventure Kelleher and *Brecknock & the East India Company* (2001) by Ken Jones.³⁷ Other exhibitions included *The Welsh Sampler Show* (2002), *Stepping Out: The Story of Women & Jazz in Wales* (2003) and *The Palace in the Lake: Early Medieval Llangors Revealed* (2004), the latter with the National Museums & Galleries of Wales as a pilot under its 'Cyfoeth Cymru Gyfan / Sharing Treasures' scheme.

By 2000 the Museum & Gallery was receiving increasing recognition for its activities. That year it won the first Welsh Language Board Bilingual Design Advertising Award for the quality of its exhibition posters. These, together with extensive direct mailing, were helping to raise the Museum's profile. Then in 2001 The Council for the Protection of Rural Wales presented the Museum with a 'Rural Wales Award' for its contribution to the culture of the region through its displays, exhibitions and events.

One such event was *The Big Draw*. Artist Pip Woolf suggested to the curator in 2000 that the Museum take part in a national celebration of drawing each October. The events co-ordinated in Brecon by Pip Woolf between 2000 and 2004 – with enthusiastic voluntary support from local artists – were remarkable opportunities for people of all ages and backgrounds to take part in imaginative drawing activities. In October 2001 Pip Woolf held a residency at the Museum focusing on the use of agricultural hand-tools. Her drawings from this residency are held in the collection. *The Big Draw* activities at the Museum in this period eventually expanded to such an extent that, in 2004, St Mary's Church was also used as a venue.

Another event was a biennial fund-raising art auction organized by the Museum with the Brecknock Society & Museum Friends. There had been an earlier auction in 1997 but a series of more developed biennial auctions began in December 2000. Artists were very supportive by submitting works to be auctioned. Half the proceeds went to the artists and half was used to help the Museum. Jeremy Rye, an experienced art auctioneer, kindly agreed to fulfil that role. Considerable sums were raised in three auctions (6th December 2000, 15th November 2002 and 26th November 2004). This enabled the Museum to purchase equipment such as surveillance cameras which, by upgrading security, permitted it to borrow items from National Collections. With strict loan conditions this would not, otherwise, have been possible. Auction funds were also used to support an oral history project. Artist Edgar Holloway was recorded talking about his 1940s stay at Capel-y-ffin and former Ystradgynlais resident Caryl Roese vividly recalled her childhood visits to Josef Herman's studio. Most of the substantial funds from the 2004 auction were put towards the purchase of Eric Ravilious's 1938 watercolour *The Waterwheel*.

Between 2000 and 2005 around one hundred and eighty artworks (not including Bernard Mitchell's photographs of artists which were later transferred)

were acquired by the Museum at a rate of acquisition of thirty-six a year. Half were acquired with total or partial funding from the Art Trust. The other half were high quality purchases, donations, bequests or transfers such as the works transferred from the Arts Council of Wales. The majority were modern or contemporary works in a wide range of media but there were also significant earlier works.

Epilogue

The impact, between 1992 and 2005, of the development of the visual arts upon the reputation of Brecknock Museum & Art Gallery has been considerable. In this period there were one hundred and twenty-five widely promoted exhibitions of art and visual culture. Most of these related directly to Wales, particularly to Brecknockshire and its immediate surrounding area. There were also art-related activities such as regular well-attended exhibition openings, The Big Draw and fund-raising art auctions.

The town of Brecon, during the same period, has evolved into a place to visit to experience art. As well as public galleries there are now half a dozen commercial galleries.

In this period, too, the Museum's visual art collection has been expanded by around two hundred and seventy works or groups of works. The quality and comprehensiveness of this collection has been greatly enhanced by the creation, in 2000, of Brecknock Museum Art Trust. This, undoubtedly, gave the Museum a considerable collecting advantage over many regional museums and galleries.

A significant regional art collection has been created at Brecon which reflects aspects of the region's life, landscapes and concerns. Whilst this mostly consists of modern or contemporary works, there are also late eighteenth and early nineteenth century topographical views. The particular attraction for artists of Capel-y-ffin and Llanthony in the early and mid-twentieth century has been recognized with a wide range of notable watercolours. The Museum's holding of Ystradgynlais works by Josef Herman and artists known to him is one of the most significant in a public collection. There are a great many imaginative contemporary responses in different media to the varied landscapes of Brecknockshire as well as to its agriculture. Printmaking & artists' books are also well represented. As a counterbalance to Victorian idealistic historical sculpture there is modern work in stone, wood, textile and even thistledown, both representational and abstract. The Museum is one of the few in Britain with a jazz art collection. Aspects of Welsh identity and mythology are explored, too, in part referencing the Mabinogion, the Museum's fine collection of love-spoons and the war-time evacuation of the Epynt.

There are, of course, many artists who should still be represented in the collection. Eric Gill is represented by Capel-y-ffin wood engravings but not by stone sculpture. Augustus John, James Dickson Innes and Cedric Morris have all worked in the region. Joseph Mallord William Turner and John Sell Cotman painted watercolours in Brecon. In the mid-1990s the curator was unsuccessful in trying to obtain at auction an early Turner watercolour of Brecon Castle and Castle Street Bridge. Despite having obtained grant-aid he was outbid. If the Art Trust had existed then the collection might now include a Turner.

With collections come responsibilities. Art collections need to be cared for. They need to be displayed imaginatively and sensitively or stored carefully in a suitable environment. With a costly building to maintain funding will, hopefully, be found to meet this challenge. Exhibitions, too, demand time and resources and, ideally, require specialist staff.

The Art Fund, Britain's largest art charity, has recently highlighted a collecting crisis in museums.³⁸ It surveyed three hundred British museums. Many of them can no longer actively add to their collections. Only a tenth of museums can now afford to allocate a fixed proportion of their income to collecting. With a dedicated Art Trust, therefore, Brecknock Museum & Art Gallery is in an exceptionally good position to collect artwork and to care for it.

The visual art collection at Brecknock Museum & Art Gallery is outstanding in both the quality and breadth with which it represents its environmentally and historically unique region. It has evolved into a regional collection of national significance with outstanding individual works. This rich community resource enhances substantially the importance of Brecon as a cultural tourist destination. Used imaginatively, its potential to educate and to stimulate is immense.

Acknowledgements

The Trustees of Brecknock Museum Art Trust, Sue Hiley Harris and the artists, Museum staff, volunteers and members of the Brecknock Society & Museum Friends and the public who have supported the development of the visual arts at Brecknock Museum & Art Gallery in this period. The copyright holders of images reproduced are thanked. Simon Harpur took most of the artwork photographs. Whilst considerable lengths have been taken to achieve reasonable accuracy and completeness there may be omissions which the author hopes will not detract from the overall value of the account.

It is intended to publish this account separately with comprehensive appendices listing all exhibitions held and artworks acquired between 1992 and 2005. The article is dedicated to the memory of Gaby Steffens, 1957–2002.

DAVID MOORE

¹ Moore, David *Brycheiniog* XXXVI, 1992–93, pp.12–15; XXVII, 1994–5, pp.11–13; XXVIII, 1995–6, pp.11–13; XXIX, 1996–7, pp.11–14; XXXI, 1998–9, pp.9–14; XXXII, 2000, pp. 7–10; XXXIII, 2001, pp.7–11; & XXXV, 2003, pp. 12–18.

² These are reproduced in *Brycheiniog* XXXVII, 2005, p.54, plate 2.

³ ‘Artworks’ are here understood to include paintings, drawings, prints, sculpture, studio pottery, embroidered pictures, art photography and love-spoons. Many items discussed might also be regarded as items of ‘social history’. Many items of ‘social history’ could also have been included. Too sharp a division would have been meaningless.

⁴ Read, Benedict *Victorian Sculpture*, 1982, Yale, p.208.

⁵ Sumner, Ann & Smith, Greg (eds.) *Thomas Jones, 1742–1803: An Artist Rediscovered*, 2003, Yale / National Museums & Galleries of Wales, p.146.

⁶ The Museum’s oil paintings by artists born before 1870 are listed in Wright, Christopher et al *British & Irish Paintings in Public Collections*, 2006, Yale.

⁷ Moore, David (ed.) *Brecon in Old Photographs*, 1993, Alan Sutton.

⁸ Williams, Jed *The Jazz Route to Brecon: A Souvenir of 100 Years of Jazz & 10 years of Brecon Jazz*, 1993.

⁹ Davies, Ivor *Native Subjects: Welsh Painting Over Forty Years*, 1995.

¹⁰ Another example was: *Wonderful Wood: Its Uses from Cradle to Grave* (1995–6) curated by David Newman.

¹¹ Brecknock Museum & Art Gallery: Acquisition & Disposal Policy, 2004.

¹² Redevelopment work also included reinterpreting the Victorian assize court with figures, sound and lights, installing orientation signs for the visually impaired and refurbishing the shop.

¹³ Jones, Eryl ‘Into View . . . with David Moore’ *Brecon & Radnor Express*, 22nd May 1997, p.4.

¹⁴ MacDonald, Robert ‘Museum attendance falls’, letter to *Brecon & Radnor Express*, 13th November 1997, p.8.

¹⁵ Davies, Ivor ‘Praise for Museum’, letter to *Brecon & Radnor Express*, 20th November 1997, p.8.

¹⁶ Tinker, David ‘Sad situation for Museum’, letter to *Brecon & Radnor Express*, 4th December 1997, p.8.

¹⁷ Moore, David ‘56 Group at 50’, *Planet*, December/January 2006–7, pp. 122–124.

¹⁸ Shirley Jones in *The Written Word, The Printed Image: 25 Years of the Red Hen Press*, 2003, Newport Museum & Art Gallery, p.7, writes: “The traditional artist book, or livre d’artiste, is a book which is produced with as much visual content as text and where the intention is to display a direct collaboration between the artist and writer.”

¹⁹ Miles, Jonathan *Eric Gill & David Jones at Capel-y-ffin*, 1992, Seren; Meyrick, Robert *The Etchings & Engravings of Edgar Holloway*, 1996, Scolar Press, p.105, catalogue entry 267.

²⁰ Lord, Peter *The Visual Culture of Wales: Imagining the Nation*, 2000, UWP, pp. 255–257.

²¹ Read, Benedict *Victorian Sculpture*, 1982, Yale, pp. 208–9.

²² Davies, Ivor et al *Ivor Davies: Legends From the White Book*, 1998, Wolseley Fine Arts.

²³ Matthews, Sally *Sentient Beings*, 1999, Oriel Mostyn.

²⁴ Warner, Richard *A Second Walk Through Wales in August and September 1798*, 1799, Bath, 118–122.

²⁵ Jenkins, David Fraser *John Piper: The Robert & Rena Lewin Gift to the Ashmolean Museum*, 1992, Catalogue entry 4, pp 9–10 & p. 22.

²⁶ Holloway, Jennifer (ed.) *Capel-y-ffin to Ditchling: Watercolours & Drawings by Edgar Holloway*, 2001.

²⁷ Gammon, Reg ‘The Welsh Farm, 1939–1962’ in *One Man’s Furrow: Ninety Year’s of Country Living*, 1990, Webb & Bower, pp. 62–131.

²⁸ Alley, Ronald *Graham Sutherland*, 1982, Tate, pp 86–7. This work is a study for an oil painting in Darlington Art Gallery. The study is inscribed on the back “Painted from impressions received after watching peculiar sunset over a moss-covered valley. Object is a dead tree trunk covered with moss.”

²⁹ Miles, Jonathan et al *To Petra With Love*, 2001, Wolseley Fine Arts, pp. 34–5 & pp. 40–1; Moore, David ‘David Jones (1895-1974): Petra Gill, Capel-y-ffin; Orchard, Capel-y-ffin; Christ In the Garden’, *The National Art Collections Fund 2002 Review*.

³⁰ Moore, David ‘Josef Herman (1911-2000): Pen-y-bont Inn, Ystradgynlais’, *The National Art Collections Fund 2004 Review*, p.125.

³¹ Osmond, Ozi Rhys *Carboniferous Collision: Josef Herman’s Epiphany in Ystradgynlais*, 2006, Institute of Welsh Affairs.

³² Powers, Alan *Eric Ravilious: Imagined Realities*, 2003, Imperial War Museum / Philip Wilson, p. 42 & Plate 47. “In a quest for concentrated solitude, Ravilious spent February and early March of 1938 at Capel-y-ffin in the Black Mountains, staying with the Saunders family in a farmhouse whose primitive conditions he enjoyed, eventually becoming used to five pork meals a day.”

³³ Moore, David ‘Eric Ravilious (1903-42): The Waterwheel’, *The National Art Collections Fund 2005 Review*, pp. 140–1.

³⁴ Moore, David *Eight Stones, Eight Artists: Exploring the Beacons Way Art Trail*, 2007 (forthcoming), Little Fish Press.

³⁵ Lambirth, Andrew *David Tress: Drawings*, 2003, West Wales Arts Centre; Newell, Robert *Environment into Landscape: Paintings & Drawings by Robert A Newell*, 2003.

³⁶ Henri, Adrian *Environments & Happenings*, 1974, Thames & Hudson, pp.112, 114–15.

³⁷ Another was *Postmen’s Roots: Two Thousand Years of Postal History in Brecknockshire* (2003) curated by Mike Scott Archer on behalf of the Welsh Philatelic Society.

³⁸ The Art Fund ‘Collecting Crisis’, *The Art Fund News Release*, 11th May 2006.

