

BRYCHEINIOG

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The Brecknock Society and Museum Friends

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GOLYGYDDOL

Bu'n fwriad gennym sicrhau ymddangosiad y gyfrol hon – yr unfed a deugain – i gyd-ddigwydd â Darlith Goffa Syr John Lloyd yn Neuadd y Dref, Aberhonddu, yn gyntaf gan mai dyma'r unig achlysur y ceir nifer sylweddol o aelodau o dan yr un to, mwy o lawer na'r rhai sydd yn mynychu'r Cyfarfod Blynnyddol, ac felly'n gyfle i leihau'r gwaith o ddsbarthu'r gyfrol, a hefyd y costau postio, sydd yn mynd yn drymach bob blwyddyn. Hefyd, bydd hyn yn golygu bod y flwyddyn sydd yn ymddangos ar y clawr yn cydweddu â flwyddyn y calendar. Mae pedwar deg un o gyfrolau wedi ymddangos ers yr un gyntaf yn ôl ym 1955, pum deg pump o flynyddoedd yn ôl, a'r arfer yn y gorffennol oedd dangos blwyddyn y cysodiad yn hytrach na'r cyhoeddiad, a fu'n achos i gryn ddryswch ar ran ein darllenwyr. Fy ngobaith yw y bydd modd sicrhau cyfrol flynyddol o hyn ymlaen, ac arbrawf fydd yr ymgais i ddefnyddio ein hunig achlysur cyhoeddus fel man lawnsio ar gyfer *Brycheiniog*.

Rydym yn Gymdeithas o Gyfeillion yr Amgueddfa yn ogystal â chymdeithas sydd yn ymddiddori mewn hanes yr hen Sir, ac felly bu'r digwyddiadau a fu o'r pwys mwyaf inni yn ystod y flwyddyn aeth heibio'n gysylltiedig â hynt a helynt adeiladau'r amgueddfa bresennol a'i rhagflaenydd. Yn anffodus, ni lwyddodd y cais am gymorth ariannol i Gronfa'r Loteri am drwsiadau helaeth ac ailwampiad Amgueddfa ac Oriel Gelf Brycheiniog, ond deallwn nad oedd y sefyllfa yn hollol ddi-obaith, a bydd Cyngor Sir Powys yn ail-gyflwyno cais diwygiedig tua diwedd mis Ionawr eleni. Gobeithio y byddwn yn llwyddo yn hyn o beth, rhywbeth a fydd yn arlwybro diwygiadau a digwyddiadau mawr ar gyfer ein cartref, Amgueddfa Brycheiniog.

Ein cartref wreiddiol, wrth gwrs, oedd yr Hen Amgueddfa yn Heol Morgannwg, Aberhonddu. Prynodd y Gymdeithas hen gapel y Cynulleidfawyr Saesneg i gartrefu casgliad y Gymdeithas yn ôl yn y tri-degau, a phan symudwyd y casgliad i'r hen Lysoedd Barn ar Rodfa'r Capten, lesiwyd yr hen adeilad am rent botwm corn i Gyngor Sir Powys, a defnyddiwyd yr anheddau at ddibenion storio a gweithdai. Yn wyneb cyflwr trychinebus yr adeilad, penderfynodd Cyngor y Gymdeithas y byddai'n ddilys i werthu'r adeilad, er mwyn rhyddhau adnoddau i gefnogi'r cais am arian y Loteri a'u defnyddio at brosiectau penodol yn gysylltiedig ag Amgueddfa ac Oriel Gelf Brycheiniog. Bellach mae'r Hen Amgueddfa ar werth, ac rydym yn ffyddiog y byddwn yn gallu dod o hyd i brynwr er gwaethaf cyflwr truenus y farchnad.

Buom yn ymdrechu yn ystod y flwyddyn aeth heibio i ddod o hyd i werthfannau ychwanegol i'r Cyfnodolyn hwn, a llwyddwyd i werthu nifer foddhaol o gopiau yng Ngŵyl y Gelli, ac rydym hefyd wedi dod i gytundeb â Chyngor Llyfrau Cymru a fydd yn hysbysebu a dosbarthu rhifynau'r gyfrol yn y dyfodol, a fydd yn fodd inni gyrraedd cynulleidfa ehangach.

BRYNACH PARRI

EDITORIAL

My intent has been to endeavour to ensure that this 41st Volume of *Brycheiniog* appears in conjunction with the Sir John Lloyd Memorial Lecture, in order to reduce distribution costs, as the Lecture at Brecon's Guildhall is the occasion on which more members of the Brecknock Society and Museum Friends are gathered together than at any other time, including our AGM. Readers will note that we have reached our forty-first volume in the fifty-fifth year of the existence of the Journal: I hope to be able to maintain publication of one volume annually, with the date appearing on the publication coinciding with the year of publication rather than of collation, which has caused some confusion to subscribers and readers alike in past years.

The major developments for the Society in the course of the past year are related largely to the Museum building, and to the application to the National Lottery Fund for monies for the refurbishment of the Museum and Art Gallery. Unfortunately, the initial bid for Lottery funding failed, although we understand that we were quite close to success, and Powys County Council will re-submit their application towards the end of January this year. We can only hope for success, as the condition of the Museum building is a cause for concern and alarm.

The other building which is of particular significance for us, and which has remained the property of the Society, is the old Museum in Glamorgan Street. This, the former English Congregationalist Chapel, was originally purchased by the Society as the first County Museum, and, after the removal of the main collection to the former Assize Court building on Captain's Walk, the building was leased at a peppercorn rent to Powys County Council and used for storage and workshop facilities. In view of the woeful state of the building, the Society decided to dispose of the Old Museum, and to use the funds thus released to help with the Lottery Bid match-funding, and with specific projects linked with the Brecknock Museum and Art Gallery. The building is currently on sale, and we have every faith that, despite the poor state of the market, a suitable purchaser will shortly be found.

We have endeavoured in the course of the past year to find new outlets for this Journal, and we enjoyed some success in sales at the Hay Festival, and we have also negotiated the distribution of the Journal by the Welsh Books Council, which may enable us to reach a wider audience.

BRYNACH PARRI

NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

John Vickers

British Secretary of the World Methodist History Society, 1972–2000, and Editor of the Dictionary of Methodism, Dr John Vickers is a distinguished historian and lecturer on the History of Methodism.

Colin A. Lewis

Glasbury-born Colin Lewis is Professor Emeritus of Geography at Rhodes University, South Africa, where he also teaches a course on change ringing. He is Ringing Master at Grahamstown Cathedral.

John Lloyd

(1797–1875) Grandfather of Sir John Lloyd, Founder of the Brecknock Society. Educated at Christ College, Eton and Balliol and called to the Bar in 1819. He published several volumes of poetry, in both Latin and English, and won first prize at the 1834 Cardiff Eisteddfod.

R. F. Peter Powell

After a career in Mathematics, Peter Powell worked for the Wales Water Board. Treasurer of the Brecknock Society for many years, he is a respected authority on place names, and has recorded the histories of numerous chapels in Wales.

Jenny Stanesby Moody

Graduate in Modern Languages and Law, worked as honorary chairman of various health and education bodies in London, before retiring in 1993 to Talgarth, where she pursues her interests in archaeology, history and language.

Rev. Herbert Hughes

After a career in the ministry and as Principal Lecturer in Religious Studies at Trinity College, Carmarthen, the Rev. Herbert Hughes retired to Llanddew, where he still resides. He has contributed a number of articles to *Brycheiniog*, and is the author of books on the Epynt Clearances, Howell Harries and Evan Jones.

T. M. Thirgood

Tom Thirgood, a native of Bwlch, graduated in Metallurgy from Swansea University, and after a career in industry became IT guru for a number of schools in Ireland, where he now lives.

Handel Jones

Yn enedigol o Gwm Wysg, addysgwyd Handel yn Ysgol Ramadeg y Bechgyn, Aberhonddu a dechreuodd fel newyddiadurwr dan hyfforddiant yng Nghaerfyrddin ym 1962 cyn ymuno â'r BBC. Bellach mae'n gyfeithydd llawn amser ac yn byw yn Rhandirmwyn.

A translation of the above is available on <http://www.brecknocksociety.co.uk>

Richard Brecknock

British born Richard Brecknock is the founder and head of Brecknock Consulting, Adelaide, Australia, a company specialising in the promotion of Art in Public Spaces.

ADRODDIADAU/REPORTS

POWYS COUNTY ARCHIVES

This year approximately 1,200 visitors have come in person to use Powys Archives. The majority of researchers use records on microfilm/fiche, such as the parish registers and census returns, which are available for retrieval in our searchroom. In addition, the number of original items from our collections that have been issued from our strongrooms total around 1,270. Staff have responded to around 1,230 enquiries by letter or email. Approximately 274 hours of research have been undertaken as part of our paid research service.

Late in the summer of 2008 the County Council's Board adopted a series of policies for the Archives. These policies include: collection, access, preservation, outreach and a policy on volunteers. The policies have been developed for the Archives following our subscription to the National Archives Standard (TNA) in November 2007. Under the terms of the Standard, local authority archive services are required to develop and publicise their policies with regards to particular aspects of the service for the benefit of service users and other stakeholders. The policies for Powys Archives formalise current practice and levels of provision.

The National Archive discharges its duties in relation to archive repositories in part, by collecting and assessing information from repositories about their governance, storage facilities, documentation and access arrangements. In 2008 a questionnaire was completed by Catherine Richards, for Powys Archives and the returns scored by staff at TNA. For comparison purposes the scoring for 2007 is given in brackets. In addition to scoring the questionnaires, TNA has banded the results for each section of the questionnaire into four performance bands (one-star, two-star, three-star and four-star). Overall Powys Archive was judged to be a two-star service.

	Score for Powys Archives	Average score in Wales	Average score in the UK
Section 1: governance	57% (47.5%)	57% (59%)	62.0% (64.0%)
Section 2: documentation of collections	69% (57%)	59.5% (55.5%)	59.0% (57.0%)
Section 3: access and outreach services	42% (45.5%)	48.5% (43%)	57.0% (52.5%)

Section 4: preservation and conservation	56.5% (50.5%)	63% (57.5%)	65.0% (62.0%)
Section 5: buildings, security and environment	45% (36%)	57.5% (53%)	64.5% (60.5%)
Overall score	50.5% (45.5%)	55.5% (51.5%)	61.0% (58.0%)

The Powys County Council's monthly website statistics for 2008/9 show that the Powys Archives homepage continued to be within the top ten pages viewed on the Council's website. In total 80,346 hits have been recorded for the Archives webpages in the past twelve months. The most frequently used pages are those containing details of our holdings.

The online digital projects created in previous years, and which can be accessed through the Local History and Heritage webpages on the Council's website, continue to be well used. *Powys: A Day in the Life* totalled over 3.7 million hits in 2008/9. *Victorian Powys*, featuring eighteen communities, and its predecessor *Six Powys Communities Online* (history.powys.org.uk), totalled over 4 million hits. These digital projects continue to generate a large number of email enquiries to Powys Archives.

Powys Archives received a 50% grant from the MLA/V&A Purchase Grant Fund for a diary which was being offered for sale by a book dealer in Canada. The diary was written by Katherine (Kate) Williams in 1870. Kate, 1817–1903, belonged to the Williams family who owned the Bryngwyn Estate in Montgomeryshire in the nineteenth century. Her father Martin Williams bought the estate in 1813. The Williams family originated from Pant Howel, Carmarthenshire and had made a great fortune in sugar in Jamaica.

Also Powys Archives was awarded £13,391 by the National Manuscripts Conservation Trust to conserve four volumes from the parish of Llangynllo, Radnorshire. The NMCT grant fund supports conservation projects featuring records of significance in a national context. In Wales parochial records surviving from the seventeenth century are particularly rare. Four volumes have been conserved, but the collection consists of eight volumes in total. They contain an excellent series of accounts for the parish of Llangynllo, a rural parish in the county of Radnorshire, including churchwardens' accounts 1693–1871; overseers' accounts 1693–1837 (including payments to the poor 1751–1835); and assessments for poor rates 1802–1837.

Chris Price from Brecon library retired in 2009 following over 40 years with Powys Library Service. He started as a library assistant in the 1970s, and worked

his way up to Branch Librarian in Brecon. Chris had responsibility for Local Studies in Breconshire, and has an enormous knowledge of the history of the county.

In November and December 2008, Powys Archives received a large transfer of records from the National Library of Wales consisting of registers and other parochial records for ecclesiastical parishes in Powys. Parochial records include churchwardens' accounts, vestry minutes, and records of settlement, as well as a wide variety of other types of records. In 2005 the Church in Wales designated Powys Archives as the place of deposit for parish registers and parochial records for the Archdeaconry of Montgomery in the Diocese of St Asaph, the Deanery of Arwystli in the Diocese of Bangor and also the Archdeaconry of Brecon in the Diocese of Swansea and Brecon. The designation of Powys Archives as a place of deposit, and this transfer of records from the NLW, now allows Powys Archives to liaise with incumbents, and to collect material from parishes across Powys.

Powys Archives closed for two weeks in February for its annual stocktake. Staff used the time to list collections and prepare catalogues for our searchroom. Cataloguing continues throughout the year, but this two week closure of the service allows staff to tackle larger collections, mainly off-site in our outstores. Stocktake 2009 was a great success and we have finally managed to complete the numbering and listing of our collections for Radnorshire and Breconshire Urban and Rural District Councils. In total these records occupy around 200 shelves. In due course new lists will appear on our website.

Powys Archives undertook the PSQG (Public Services Quality Group) visitor survey in May and June 2009. Below are some of the results:

- 100% rate our website as good or very good
- 83% think our catalogues (including online guides) were good or very good
- 100% rate the quality and appropriateness of staff advice as good or very good
- 53% feel our opening hours were the most important area to improve
- 26% want an improvement in visitor facilities
- 41% recorded this as their first visit to Powys Archives
- 41% of visitors are female; 59% are male
- 98% rate the overall service as good or very good.

Archives Network Wales, a web resource with details of the collections held by archive services, universities, museums and libraries in Wales, underwent a major revamp in 2009 and is now called Archifau Cymru Archives Wales (ACAW). Summary details about the collections held by Powys Archives appear on the website. It also contains visitor information for each archive service and guides to using resources, and provides a gateway for those interested in locating and undertaking research in Wales. The new address is www.archiveswales.org.uk or www.archifaucymru.org.uk

In the autumn of 2009 Powys Archives appointed a new member of staff to

input our catalogues into our cataloguing system CALM. Catherine Hughes, a history graduate from Builth Wells, with experience in using archive services, including Powys Archives and the National Archives, joined the team for a period of six months. The cataloguing system CALM was purchased with the help of grant funding in 2007, and allows comprehensive searching of our catalogues by personal-name, place-name and by subject.

CALM is the most widely used cataloguing system by archive services across England and Wales, and information about each individual document is entered into a separate template. Each catalogue entry sits within a hierarchical tree within the database, reflecting the structure of collections. At the highest level information is recorded about the administrative history and content of each collection. Then at the lowest level (item level) researchers will find detailed descriptions about each document.

Powys Archives 2008–2009 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 2009 with particular reference to Breconshire are as follows:

Public and Official Records

Ystradfellte parish records: baptisms 1759–1959; marriages 1754–1971; burials 1759–1811, 1815–1882; parochial rolls 1922, 1946, 1956 [Acc 1857]

Records from the Watergate Baptist Chapel, Brecon 1853–2007 [Acc 1907]

Breconshire Quarter Sessions records, 1969 [Acc 1911]

Records from Battle & Aberysgir Board/CP School, Breconshire 1879–1950 [Acc 1918]

Additional records from Breconshire primary schools: Ystradfellte School: Summary register, 1911–1914; Attendance registers, 1940–1969; Ysgol Thomas Stephens, Pontneddfechan [Pontneathvaughan]: Attendance registers, 1941–1994; Registers of meals, 1956–1970; Savings club ledger, 1985–1986 [Acc 1920]

Ystradgynlais Rural District Council, Breconshire: Standing Orders, nd [Acc 1923]

Additional records from Ysgol Thomas Stephens, Pontneddfechan, and Ystradfellte School. Breconshire [Acc 1938]

Powys County Council minutes, includes Board and various committees 1995–2008 [Acc 1863, 1953]

Parochial records and parish registers for Powys transferred from the National Library of Wales [Acc 1872]

Non Official Records

Engraving of Adelina Patti, nd [Acc 1859]

Items relating to Hay Brownie Pack: photo album, letters on Guide and Brownie hut, folder of photographs, certificates and cuttings 1984–2004 [Acc 1867]

Records of the Brecon Council of Churches, now Cytun – Brecon Churches Together: minutes 1968–2007, correspondence 1970s–1990s [Acc 1887]

Six vols: 3 farm account books, Maesmynis 1825–1892; 1 vol from a boot and shoe dealer, Builth 1848–1855; 1 vol for goods bought for Builth Poor Law Union 1840s, 1 account book reused as a scrap book 1870s [Acc 1889]

Small bundle of local studies notes, relating to Sennybridge and district [?] –2009 [Acc 1897]

Mounted photograph of the Deacons of the Independent Chapel, Llanwrtyd Wells, Breconshire, c1930 [Acc 1900]

Research papers and photographs [originals and copies] for Reverend Hughes' book 'An Uprooted Community: A History of Epynt', Breconshire, C20th [Acc 1912]

Material on Poor Law, railways, fishing; Builth Wells and district, Breconshire, C19th [Acc 1924]

Girl Guiding Breconshire – Executive Committee minutes 2001–2007 [Acc 1928]

Display boards relating to different historical subjects, buildings and events in Builth Wells [Acc 1929]

Two title deeds (lease agreements) relating to properties at Defynnog, Breconshire, 1824–1838 [Acc 1937]

Additional Batts family material. Breconshire and Radnorshire [Acc 1919]

CATHERINE RICHARDS

BRECKNOCK MUSEUM & ART GALLERY REPORT

The past year saw the disappointing rejection of our first application to the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) for a financial contribution towards the redevelopment of the Museum. As a consequence a number of other smaller projects, including the Temporary Roof project, were delayed or cancelled. This was clearly a huge disappointment for all concerned; however, feed back from the HLF remains positive. We are all continuing to give 100% to the re-submission of a bid, with added value to the application, and later this year we hope it will be second time lucky. Competition for HLF funds continues to grow, however, the Council's significant financial commitment to the redevelopment remains in place and we hope it will continue to hold us in good stead.

Redevelopment aside, Museum business continues apace. During the last year with financial support from the Brecknock Society & Museum Friends and the Brecknock Museum Art Trust (BMAT), the Museum has purchased picture racking for the Museum's Art collection, significantly raising the storage standards and accessibility of the collection. The BMAT also provided the funding for the digitisation of the Art Collection, which will ultimately see the collection available on-line.

During the past year Brecknock Museum has created a number of successful and broad ranging exhibitions. Sandra Masterson's 'Space to Place' was a contemporary art exhibition produced in partnership with the Fforest Fawr Geopark. The artist produced works in response to the Geopark landscape and with financial help from CyMAL a series of schools workshops were enjoyed by nearly 200 local school children. Later in the year a further exciting partnership with Amgueddfa Cymru – National Museum Wales and Glamorgan University saw the development of the Artist |Object| Project. Funded by the Esmée Fairbairn Foundation, three artists were commissioned to produce new works in response to objects from the National Museum's Applied Art Collection. The new works and those inspirational objects were then displayed at Brecknock Museum for the first time. One of the artists created the *People's Collection of Pottery: Brecknockshire*, with the people of Brecknock invited to loan a treasured item of pottery to the project, and chosen objects displayed alongside items from the National Museums collection. Both these partnerships have proven very successful and Brecknock Museum looks forward to developing these links in the future. The Year also saw opportunities to display items from the Museums own art collection, as a preview to the future creation of a permanent art gallery at the Museum.

The Brecknock Museum collection expanded by 407 items during the year, the archaeology collection received a 15th Century copper alloy weight for a gold

Noble and a Roman copper alloy Horse Pendant, both found locally, while the Art Collection accessioned *The Peoples Collection of Pottery: Brecknock*, a publication (edition 1) produced by the artist Catherine Bertola.

The year also marked the retirement, after nearly 30 years of service for the Museum, of Assistant Curator and local historian Malcolm Johns. Malcolm's knowledge of the collections, and in particular, the photographic collections are second to none, and he is currently acting as an advisor for public enquiries and the documentation of the extensive photographic collection.

Although the HLF bid was unsuccessful, works to improve the current condition of the building continue and the first phase of external doors and windows have been repaired and repainted. Currently, the Court room roof is being insulated and its slates replaced with brand new Welsh slates mined from Ffestiniog; this work was only possible after extra funding was directed from the Council and a CADW grant was received.

The challenges remain high, our visitor numbers continue to increase and we look forward to your continued support.

NIGEL BLACKAMORE MPhil
Senior Curator
Brecknock Museum

THE ROLAND MATHIAS PRIZE 2009

The Roland Mathias Prize was awarded for the third time at a well-attended event at Brecon Guildhall in March 2009. This award for Welsh writing in English has quickly established itself as part of the literary firmament in Wales, with a track record of recognising the work of the best of Welsh writers. But it remains a literary prize firmly rooted in Brecon, where it operates under the aegis of the Brecknock Society and Museum Friends.

This was the first time the Prize was awarded in the absence of my father, who died in 2007, and it was gratifying to witness the unveiling of a vivid portrait of him by the artist Lorraine Bewsey. It was my father who donated the funds to set up the Prize, and the four categories – poetry, short stories, literary criticism and Welsh history – reflect the range of his literary interests. Once again, the event itself was supported by BBC Cymru/Wales, and I am pleased to be able to report that the BBC will continue to support the award of the next Prize in 2011.

In determining who should win the £2,000 Prize in 2009, the panel of judges notched up a number of ‘firsts’. It was the first time that the shortlist consisted entirely of women writers. It is not that the judges deliberately set out to create an all-women shortlist, in an effort to be politically progressive. It was just the way it happened. The consensus among the judges was that the four best books just happened to be written by women.

For the first time also, the shortlist was not dominated by poetry (since novels are not eligible, poetry had hitherto come to the fore). The output of Welsh poetry in the English language has remained impressive, but the judges felt that two of the other categories had thrown up a greater range of work, and that deserved recognition.

For the first time, there were two works of literary criticism on the shortlist. The judging panel were impressed by the scholarship and lively writing that had gone into Professor Jane Aaron’s work on *Nineteenth Century Women’s Writing in Wales: Nation Gender and Identity* (University of Wales Press). Also on the shortlist was a work of literary criticism by an Aberystwyth academic, Sarah Prescott. *Eighteenth Century Writing from Wales: Bards and Britons* (University of Wales Press) which the judges praised for the new and original insights it brought into how Welsh writers in that period sought to preserve, or indeed reinvent, their Welsh identity.

Writing short stories is a surprisingly elusive skill, and a number of short story collections stood out and demanded to be taken into account. The judges plumped for *Some new ambush* (Salt), by Carys Davies, a writer born in Llangollen but now living in Lancaster. They described her stories as entertaining, well-written, inventive and sometimes quirky.

The lone volume of poetry shortlisted by the judges was by the Cardiff-based writer, Sheenagh Pugh. *Long haul travellers* (Seren) was praised for the clarity and impact of the writing, its consistent quality, and, above all, the fact that it was a great read. Whatever uncertainties the judging panel may have felt about their selection, they were bolstered by a message from a senior literary academic who described the shortlist as ‘imaginative, unashamedly intelligent, and progressive’.

The Prize ceremony was hosted by Nicola Heywood Thomas, arts correspondent for BBC Wales, and continued the format which has proved successful in previous years. Each of the shortlisted writers either read from, or spoke about, their work. The identity of the winner had already been decided in advance, so the performances were not material to the outcome. But it gave the audience a flavour of the different books, and you could hear some whispered debates in the hall as to who was likely to be declared the winner. Carys Davies chose to read the first part of one her most powerful short stories, and was rewarded by a significant number of sales of her book to those who wanted to know how the story finished.

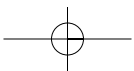
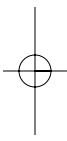
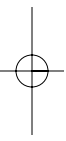
It was the task of the poet and critic, Professor Jeremy Hooker, to announce the winner of the Prize. It went to Jane Aaron, Professor of English at the University of Glamorgan for a work which introduces readers to a hundred Welsh women authors at work during the years 1780–1900, some writing in Welsh and some in English. A work of literary history as much as literary criticism, it rescues some authors from undeserved neglect and identifies the significant role played by many others in the Welsh society and culture of their time. It is welcome news that the University of Wales Press is publishing a new edition of this important work.

As on previous occasions, the Prize ceremony was preceded by a session of poetry reading, which must now be one of the best-attended poetry readings in Wales. We got good value out of the presence of Jeremy Hooker, as he read from his work, while Ifor Thomas, renowned as a ‘performance poet’, got a great deal of reaction out of the audience. Then there were two younger poets with a growing reputation, Meirion Jordan, who has family connections with Brecon, and Samantha Rhydderch, who went on to be shortlisted for the Wales Book of the Year.

Now the judging panel has already begun considering books eligible for the next Prize, the value of which has been increased to £3,000. Sam Adams has left the panel, to be replaced by Daniel Williams, a senior lecturer in English at Swansea University. I offer particular thanks to those soldiering on so cheerfully: Chris Meredith, Moira Dearnley, Catherine Merriman, Helen Gichard and Peter Powell.

GLYN MATHIAS

Chair, Roland Mathias Prize Committee



THOMAS COKE REVISITED

This is the revised text of the Sir John Lloyd Memorial Lecture given at Brecon Guildhall on Saturday, 20th March 2009 by John Vickers.

It is a pleasure, as well as an honour, to be speaking to you this evening, and to be doing so about your fellow Breconian, Thomas Coke. In the course of preparing for this occasion, I've found myself reflecting, inevitably, that it isn't the first time I've been brash enough to carry coals to Newcastle. Back in 1964 I was invited to speak about him to mark the 150th anniversary of his death. Few of you, I imagine, will remember that previous visit. But it's been sobering for me to ponder on how much has happened in that forty-five-year interval! At the moment it feels rather as if I've slipped into the cast of one of J. B. Priestley's 'Time' plays. But it's good to be back among you and talking about one of your most illustrious citizens. Thank you for giving me the opportunity.

So, taking the King of Hearts' advice to the White Rabbit, let me begin at the beginning.

Early years

Thomas Coke was born in 1747 in the house now marked as his birthplace, a stone's throw from St Mary's church where he was baptized just a week later. If that seems unduly hasty, there was a reason for it. Two earlier brothers, his only siblings, had already died in early infancy, despite his father's local reputation as an apothecary and medical factotum. Bartholomew and Ann(e) Coke were taking no chances with their latest arrival. Of Thomas's earlier ancestry I need say little, beyond the fact that most of what has appeared in print is in error. If your taste lies in that direction, I refer you to my article in the 1964 volume of *Brycheiniog*.¹ Enough, perhaps, for the present occasion that not one, but two members of his family had served as rectors of nearby Llanfrynach and so anticipated Thomas's future career in the Church.

The Brecon of Coke's day was a prosperous town and, until Telford diverted the traffic to what we now know as the A5, it lay on the main route to Ireland. So Thomas Coke grew up in anything but a backwater. That he was cherished, and perhaps indulged, as the only surviving child of middle-aged parents, we need hardly doubt; and we may surmise that this may have left a permanent mark on his personality. We really know very little more about his childhood, except that he was a pupil at Christ College during the headmastership of the Rev. David Griffith before going up to Jesus College, Oxford in 1764 (like many a Welshman before and since). Thanks to the family prosperity, he went up as a Gentleman

Commoner, and seems to have enjoyed the social life of the university – though not, so far as the evidence goes, to excess. (Evangelical Christians have always been given to painting their pre-conversion years blacker than they actually were.) He graduated in 1768, became a Fellow Commoner the next day and MA two years later; and in 1775 obtained his doctorate in Civil Law, with support from no less a person than Lord North, who was both Prime Minister and Chancellor of the University at that time. (Coke was never loth to exploit the influential contact he had made in his Oxford days.) It's worth noting, too, that during the same period he found time and opportunity to become an alderman and to follow in his father's footsteps by being elected as Bailiff of Brecon in 1770, at the tender age of 23.

Ordination and curacy at South Petherton

Meanwhile, in line with his religious upbringing, underscored perhaps by Methodist influences, he entered on a clerical career. In 1770 he was ordained deacon and then priest in 1772. At a time when it was common practice for livings to be bought, it seems significant that his next step was to become a curate in the parish of South Petherton in Somerset and to persist in that office from 1771 until driven out of the parish at Easter 1777 by parishioners who could take no more of his Methodist ways.

Nine months before this debacle a crucial meeting had taken place at Kingston St. Mary near Taunton. The vicar of that village brought together two of his friends, the young Coke and the veteran Methodist leader John Wesley. He can hardly have realised how significant a meeting that was destined to be. They both stayed overnight at the 'long, low parsonage house' which still overlooks the village churchyard, and both that evening and next morning they conversed as they strolled around the vicarage garden.

Exactly two centuries later, on 17th August 1976, following celebration of the event in the parish church, I myself spent some time strolling in the parsonage garden, hoping to pick up some vibes from that crucial meeting. Alas, none came! But we know quite clearly what was the outcome of their conversation. To Wesley it was an encouraging encounter. He was not, to coin a phrase, 'getting any younger'. Ever since his brother Charles had begun to withdraw from active involvement in the Methodist movement back in the 1750s, he had felt the need for someone to share with him the burden of leadership; but so far in vain. He was soon seeing in Thomas Coke not only a useful associate in the present state of Methodism, but a man young enough, and with sufficient qualifications, to be groomed for future leadership. As for Coke, his immediate reaction was disappointment. He had perhaps hoped that Wesley would summon him to his side, encouraging him to leave his work in a parish that was becoming more and more uncongenial and throw in his lot with the Methodists. Instead, perhaps to test his mettle, Wesley advised him to return to his parish, 'doing all he good he

could, visiting from house to house, omitting no part of his clerical duty' – in a nutshell, turning it into a Methodist stronghold. But whatever disappointment he may have felt, Coke did just this. The result a few months later was the ringing out of the church bells to celebrate his being driven from the parish. As Wesley put it just a year later, Coke had 'bidden adieu to his honourable name and determined to cast in his lot' with the people called Methodists.²

Wesley's 'right-hand man'

We need not spend long over the next few year of Coke's life. He was kept busy travelling on horseback around much of England, dealing with problems that arose as the Methodist movement began to drift from its Anglican moorings and develop an existence of its own. Some of the difficulties were with trustees who, understandably, wanted more control over the chapels they had largely paid for out of their own pockets. They resented the attempts of Wesley and the Conference of preachers to keep the reins in their own hands.³ Other problems were with the preachers themselves, who wanted to do more than preach – for example, to administer the sacraments among the Methodist people as though they were ordained clergymen. Wesley expressed his appreciation of Coke's role in measured terms in a letter to Mrs. Mary Fletcher, wife of the vicar of Madeley: 'It seems to have been the will of God for many years that I should have none to share *my proper labour* . . . Dr. Coke promises fair; at present I have none like minded.'⁴

So Coke proved invaluable to Wesley in this period of 'growing pains'. One thing in particular was of great significance for the future of Methodism. His legal training, such as it was, served Wesley's purpose well in drawing up what is known as the 'Deed of Declaration' by which the annual Conference of Methodist preachers was given legal recognition and authority once Wesley was no longer with them. This was a particularly important milestone in the history of Methodism.⁵

The result of all this, however, was that in some quarters Coke was branded as a trouble-maker, seeking to gain more power than was good for him or for Methodism. He was, after all, a comparative youngster and still quite a newcomer to the Methodist scene. And although there were times when he proved to be the friend of the itinerant preachers by championing their cause, Coke never entirely threw off the suspicion and resentment engendered by his usefulness to Wesley. When it came to choosing a successor to Wesley, Coke may well have expected to be the man; but the preachers pointedly kept him waiting seven years before they gave him his year in the Presidential chair. When they did so, in 1797, it was in response to the very real possibility that he might settle in America, just as British Methodism faced its first serious crisis since Wesley's death.⁶ There was also a more personal aspect to this, in his volatile and passionate personality. But more of that later.

1784 – the crucial year: America

This brings us to the year 1784, one that was to prove a very significant turning point in his life. Where the name of Thomas Coke is remembered at all, it is not for his role in drawing up the Deed of Declaration, but for two other things: firstly, for the part he played in establishing an independent Methodist Church in America, a church which was destined to outgrow by far the parent body back in Britain. And secondly, for the initiative he took in launching Methodist overseas missions, beginning in the West Indies, but eventually worldwide. Both of these stemmed from the crucial year 1784 and we must look at both as they radically affected the rest of Coke's life.

Firstly, then, America. The first Methodists to turn up in the Atlantic colonies were immigrants from Ireland in the 1760s. Wesley responded to their pleas by sending out preachers, the first of them in 1769. Hardly had the work begun before the War of Independence broke out and everything British became highly suspect and indeed subversive in American eyes. Most of the British-born preachers, and many of the Anglican clergy, fled the scene; and when the war was over and the colonists had gained their independence, the Methodists among them found themselves deprived not only of preaching (which might be seen as a blessing!), but also of the sacraments. To cut a long and quite complicated story short, in 1784 Wesley responded to their spiritual needs by sending out Thomas Coke and two other preachers to organise the Methodists into a separate denomination. More controversially, he ordained the two preachers as 'presbyters' and ordained (or 'consecrated') Coke as Superintendent of the new Church – a title which the American Methodists quite quickly translated into 'Bishop' (with the result that American Methodism has been 'episcopal' – in some sense or other – ever since).

Impossible here and now to go into the controversial issues raised by all this.⁷ But so far as Thomas Coke was concerned, it meant that his travelling and his responsibilities increased at a single bound. The full story of his American ventures can be found in the Journals he kept on most of his visits to the States, quite recently republished.⁸ Let me at this stage offer you one sample. The 'United States' at this early point in its history as a nation consisted of no more than the line of states bordering on the Atlantic Ocean, running south from New England to Georgia and hemmed in by the great ridge of the Appalachians to the west. Exploration and settlement of the vast plains beyond them was only just beginning, and the countryside between the ocean and the mountains was still sparsely populated. There were few towns – mainly settlements isolated by vast expanses of forest through which Coke needed a guide to help him find his way. And there were wide rivers to be crossed, sometimes at considerable risk when they were in spate. But let his Journal speak for him at this point.

Monday, 16 May 1785: I now was met by our dear valuable friend Dr. *Hopkins*. He brought me that evening to his house, though it was dark before we reached it. Here I found myself locked up in the midst of mountains. So romantic a scene I think I never beheld. The wolves, I find, frequently come out to our friend's fences at night, howling in an awful manner, and sometimes they seize upon a straying sheep. At a distance was the *Blue Ridge*, an amazing chain of mountains. I have been for a considerable time climbing up and descending the mountains. I prefer this country to any other part of *America*: it is so like Wales, my native country.⁹

It's good to find that, so far from his native land, the beautiful Blue Ridge mountains brought to his mind the Brecon Beacons of his early years.

The most important event during this first of Coke's visits to America was the 'Christmas Conference' in Baltimore. The American preachers rode in from all directions to debate and agree on a new constitution for their newly formed Church. With the backing of Wesley's authority Coke 'ordained' their acknowledged leader, Francis Asbury, as 'Superintendent' (or 'Bishop'); and a number of the other preachers were ordained as 'elders' Thus was a Church brought into being, with a potential for growth beyond any of their wildest imaginings.

An issue that arose immediately was that of slavery. The plantations in the southern States, in particular, were run on slave labour and many Methodists were slave owners. Coke lost no time in opposing this evil publicly, sometimes at risk of being horsewhipped for his pains.¹⁰ The preachers who met in Conference at Baltimore passed anti-slavery resolutions. But all this proved premature; their protests had to be moderated and it was many years before American slavery was abolished.

Coke remained in America before sailing for home at the beginning of June 1785. A final highlight of his visit was an invitation to visit George Washington at his Mount Vernon home overlooking the Potomac river. Together with his fellow-bishop Francis Asbury, he dined with the future President. Afterwards they took the opportunity of a private audience to raise the contentious issue of slavery. Washington, a slave-owner himself, judiciously avoided committing himself. On a later occasion, Coke was to pay a second visit to the man who was by then the first President of the United States and – controversially because of his British citizenship – to join Bishop Asbury in presenting a 'loyal address' on behalf of the American Methodists.¹¹

This was just the first of nine visits Coke made altogether in his capacity as one of their two 'bishops' and (in the early days) as Wesley's representative amongst them. At this point let me focus your attention on what a voyage to America meant for someone in the late eighteenth century. The contrast with our own jet-setting age could hardly be greater. In place of a few hours of trans-Atlantic flying, for Coke it meant many days – and sometimes months – at sea in the small, wooden

sailing ships of that time, and with all the ferocity of mid-Atlantic gales to contend with. I cannot illustrate this better than from Coke's own account of his *second* voyage across the Atlantic in 1786.

Friday 27 October 1786

Last night was the most tempestuous I ever knew at sea. The captain said that he has not known such a night these ten years. Though we lay to, they were very apprehensive that the wind would break the main-mast, and about midnight sent down for two hatchets, that they might cut it away if necessary . . . This morning we found that the leak let in more water than it did yesterday.

Monday 26 November

The other main-stay has also given way, but is now repaired. Out tackling has received great injury from the severe gales of wind which we have met with, with hardly any interruption from the time we sailed . . .

Thursday, 30

A dreadful gale blew from the north-west . . . I came out of my state-room, and found that a dreadful hurricane (I assuredly may call it) had just arisen. The ship was on her beam-ends. They had not time to take down the foresail, and were just going to cut away the main-mast as the last remedy, expecting every moment that the ship would be filled with water and sink . . . It is awful to hear the captain and one of the passengers who was on deck during this tremendous tempest give a relation of it. It appeared to them as if the clouds, the air, and the water were all mixed together. After the immediate danger was over, we drove with the wind, which carried us with nothing but the bare poles at the rate of six miles an hour for eight and a half.

Monday, December 4

This night was most dreadful. The sailors were just like the messengers of Job, coming one after another with dismal tidings, that now one rope was broke and now another. All the hatches were closed, as they had been twice before. And now the whole ship began to ooze at every joint. The next morning we had a little council. The captain being convinced of the impossibility of reaching the port of Halifax [Nova Scotia] this winter, it was the unanimous opinion of all, that no other refuge was left us, under God, but to sail with all possible expedition for the West-Indies. At present our sails appear like wafers. Our ropes are quite white, all the tar being washed off; in short, the ship may already be said to be half a wreck.¹²

This extract from Coke's account of his second voyage to the 'New World' brings us neatly to our next topic.

The West Indies

This time, in 1786, Coke had a twofold goal in his sights. He was revisiting the American Methodists. But he also had with him three other preachers as his companions: two of them to be stationed in Newfoundland. However, this was a case of 'the best laid schemes o' mice an' men', and matters turned out very



Thomas Coke at 33 years of age.

differently from what had been planned. The voyage lasted a whole three months during which they were at the mercy of mid-Atlantic storms, as described above. Driven far to the south, their ship, or what was left of it, at last made land on the Caribbean island of Antigua on the morning of Christmas Day. Here is part of Coke's own account of their arrival:

December 25

This day we landed in Antigua, and in going up the town of St. John's we met brother Baxter in his band, going to perform divine service. After a little refreshment I went to our chapel and read prayers, preached and administered the sacrament. I had one of the cleanest audiences I ever saw. All the negro women were dressed in white linen gowns, petticoats, handkerchiefs and caps; and I did not see the least spot on any of them. The men were also dressed as neatly. In the afternoon and evening I had very large congregations.¹³

Two quite remarkable coincidences here. Firstly, Antigua was the first of the Caribbean islands into which Methodism had been introduced, around 1760. This was thanks to a planter and leading citizen, Nathaniel Gilbert, who had met John Wesley during a visit to London. Back in Antigua, he began to preach to his household, including his slaves. So Coke was not slow to see their arrival in Antigua of all places as providential. Secondly, John Baxter was already known to Coke. A naval shipwright who was also a lay preacher, he had been ordained by Coke during his first American visit and had already built up a flourishing Methodist society on the island. Their meeting on that Christmas morning must have been as joyful as it was unexpected!

This was the beginning of a period of rapid expansion of Methodist witness in the West Indies. Coke himself was to pay three more visits to these 'islands in the sun'. He greatly appreciated the beauty of their tropical landscapes. Viewing, for example, the lake in the crater of the Grand Etang Mountain on Grenada during his third Caribbean tour, he wrote in uncharacteristic strain:

The lake is surrounded by large peaks covered with wood. If I was to turn hermit, I think I should fix on this place, where I would make circular walks and fix an observatory on one of the peaks, and spend my time in communion with God and in the study of Astronomy and Botany.¹⁴

Given Coke's continuing peripatetic lifestyle, this was indeed a pipe dream!

By the time of his last visit to the Caribbean in 1793 there were twelve missionaries, working in ten of the islands, with a total of nearly 7,000 members, most of them among the slave population. By the time of his death in 1814 there were twelve West Indian circuits with a total membership of 17,000 and this growth was to continue. But what may well seem more significant is the missionaries' championship of the slaves and their witness against slavery itself. Slavery in the Caribbean was much more vicious than that on the American mainland. Savage cruelty was all too common a feature, inspired probably by fear – the proportion of slaves to whites in the islands was far higher than in America. The missionaries found themselves in a dilemma. Their sympathy with, and concern for the slaves was unmistakable. On the other hand, they were dependent on the good will of the plantation owners for their access to the slaves whom they hoped to convert as well as champion. Coke himself experienced this dilemma, and it continued to affect the missions for many years.¹⁵

Here in the West Indies we are witnessing the birth of what would become a worldwide expansion of Methodism, with Coke as the key figure in its initial stages. He fully deserves his unofficial title of 'Father of the Missions' – without his combination of enthusiasm and dedication, it may safely be said, Methodist foreign missions would not have got 'off the ground' for many years to come.

Once again, I can only outline the story and Thomas Coke's part in the missions generally. For very good reasons both Wesley and the Conference were very

hesitant about responding to calls from overseas. Quite apart from any other considerations, funds were always stretched to the limits and there were never enough preachers to meet the demands of the work at home. It needed the comparatively youthful enthusiasm of Thomas Coke to goad them into a more positive, though still hesitant, response. And this was basically the situation right up to the eve of Coke's death in 1814.¹⁶

Let us be clear about one thing. Despite the wording of the plaque on the rear of his birthplace, Coke himself never served as a missionary. His role was the more fundamental one of initiating, organising and (most importantly) financing the earliest overseas missions: first and foremost in the West Indies. The rest of his life, in addition to his continuing role as a leading figure in both British and American Methodism, plus various literary ventures of his own, almost single-handedly he recruited and equipped more and more volunteers for the work overseas, and supported them once they were in place. That support took four main forms. Firstly, as I have already indicated, the goading of the leading Methodist preachers, and Wesley himself, into action. But secondly, the raising of funds by begging from all and sundry – not just from the 'people called Methodists'. His very first appeal, at the end of 1783, was addressed 'to all the real lovers of mankind'. (And this was nearly a decade before William Carey's better known missionary appeal.) Then again, Coke was never loth to trudge the streets of any town he happened to be staying in, begging from door to door for the missionary cause. I have called this, in the words of George Herbert's hymn, 'drudgery divine'. Thirdly, there was his own giving, dipping into his substantial, but not unlimited, resources whenever there was a shortfall in the available funds. We see this happening in some of his surviving correspondence with Thomas Williams, a Brecon attorney who handled his financial affairs for him. Here, for example, are two letters on bread-and-butter matters; the first written from Bristol in August 1783, just twelve months before his first venture abroad, the second from London as he was preparing to leave on a second American visit.

Bristol, August 1, 1783

Dear Sir,

Whatever is necessary to be done for the Recovery of the Principal & Interest due to me from Prosser I beg of you to do. My Mother died intestate. She had a Jointure settled upon her of eight hundred Pounds; but I made it up twelve hundred upwards on the Death of my Father, & gave into her keeping Mortgages & Bonds to that amount. If the Suit against Prosser had been carried on in my Name at first, there would have been no trouble now. However, we must do the best we can: & if it be too late to bring anything to effect before the Sessions after the next, we must exercise Patience. Only, I will beg of you to procure for me the Principal & Interest as soon as you can.

London, 17 January 1786

What makes me trouble you with so many Letters is this: In a few Weeks I am to set off for Ireland, if it please God; where I intend to be, almost till the time of my Sailing again for America. I am this Day going to set off for the Isles of Jersey and Guernsey, and purpose to be back by Friday fortnight at farthest; at which time I shall be in full expectation of receiving an Account of my affairs. Indeed, I shall take it unkind, if you don't send me the Account by that time. And in the *mean* time you may give *due* notice to the proper Persons concerning the Payment of their Debt by [Michaelmas: deleted] Midsummer at farthest.¹⁷

Coke's need to realise his assets grew more urgent with the growth of the missionary work, as a later note to Williams in 1795 illustrates. Here we have one of his references to the foreclosure of what he calls 'the Coity mortgage', referring not to the Coity near Bridgend, but to Coity Mawr, a property still standing at Talybont-on-Usk not far from here.

Letter to Thomas Williams, Dublin, 8 April 1795:

A particular circumstance renders it expedient for me to intreat the favour of you to pay me the year's Interest on the Coity Mortgage, due last February, now, A Bill of £150 is just come from the West Indies on account of our Missions in those Islands. Those Missions have but £80 at present in the Bank; and therefore I must lend £70, to take up the Bill.¹⁸

But this personal giving was not quite the end of the story. By the spring of 1804 Coke was 56 and still a bachelor – too much of a bird-of-passage to be easily ensnared! But this was not to last. And the birdlime that proved effective (or, if you prefer a change of metaphor, his Achilles' heel) was none other than his passionate loyalty to the missions and missionaries. That spring he was in Bristol, promoting that cause as always. In one of his audiences was a lady from Bradford-on-Avon, Penelope Goulding Smith, the daughter of a well-to-do solicitor from whom she had inherited a substantial fortune. She was clearly taken with Coke, and more than just with his eloquence. She promised him a hundred guineas (ah, how much more persuasively guineas could speak than mere pounds sterling in those pre-decimal days!) if he would call on her at Bradford; and when he did so his heart was quickly mortgaged to her. They were married the following year. She gave up her home to share in his peripatetic life and her inheritance to boost the mission funds. Sadly, she survived this drastic change of lifestyle only five years, leaving Coke devastated by his loss of a partner. But not so devastated that he did not speedily find a successor in another maiden lady, the devout Methodist Ann Loxdale, whose modest fortune followed the same path as its predecessor. But I would hate to leave you with the impression that Thomas Coke was the male equivalent of a 'gold digger', marrying into money for the sake of his commitments to the missions. His devotion to both wives and his devastating grief at losing them are plainly revealed by the records of this last phase of his life.



Thomas Coke in early middle-age.

Appearance and personality

Time to attempt a portrait of this world citizen of yours whose name is known to so many (Methodists at least) around the world. Although the Coke Memorial Church here in Brecon is sadly no more, replaced by a supermarket, there are still churches named in his memory, not only in South Petherton, but in places as far flung as Jamaica and Sri Lanka. So far as his appearance is concerned, Coke was short – little more than five feet tall, with attractive features that remained youthful even after his figure had filled out later in life. William Wilberforce, who knew him well, famously described him thus: ‘He looked a mere boy when he was turned fifty, with such a smooth apple face, and little round mouth, that if it had been forgotten you might have made as good a one by thrusting in your thumb.’¹⁹

As to his personality, well, I hope I have already conveyed something of this by outlining his life. ‘Volatile’ and ‘impulsive’ are two adjectives that chiefly come to mind; but to them we need to add ‘warm-hearted’ and ‘candid’. However given he

may have been to say and do things he quickly regretted, Coke was never slow to admit a fault and to apologise for it; and he never harboured a grudge at being rebuked. How many of us can claim as much? John Wesley summed this up in a thoroughly eighteenth century way. The occasion of this was at the 1788 Conference, where Coke had been passionately advocating that it was time for the Methodists to separate from the Church. Wesley commented:

Dr. Coke and I are like the French and the Dutch. The French have been compared to a flea, and the Dutch to a louse. I creep like a louse, and the ground I get I keep; but the Doctor leaps like a flea, and is sometimes obliged to leap back again.²⁰

How far any of this is to be attributed to Coke's Welsh temperament is not for me to speculate! In any case, over and above all else, we cannot ignore his enthusiasm and determination in pursuing the causes he had espoused. We may well conclude that he threw himself too impulsively into more causes than he could handle; but if we do so, we should at least add that he galvanised others into courses of action that continued to bear fruit long afterwards. 'He, being dead, yet speaketh.'

His death at sea

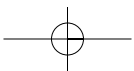
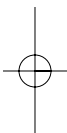
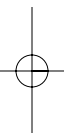
Thomas Coke died – as he had lived so long – in harness. At the Conference of 1813, following the death of his second wife, he pleaded eloquently for a new missionary venture – to India. Conference eventually gave its consent and on New Year's day 1814 he and six young preachers he had recruited and equipped, sailed from Portsmouth. This was no sudden impulse. Coke was realising a vision he had cherished for thirty years. Trans-Atlantic and other commitments had merely delayed its fulfilment. And no pleas from his fellow preachers could dissuade him from accompanying the missionaries in person.

The East Indiamen in which the party sailed were much larger ships than Coke had hitherto encountered; and because the war with France was at its height they sailed in convoy. There was, of course, no short cut through the Suez Canal; the voyage was a long one and weather conditions prevented them from putting in at Madeira or the Canary Islands, so they rounded the Cape and entered the Indian Ocean still without putting into any port. On Tuesday May 3rd, just four months after sailing from Portsmouth, Coke was found dead on the floor of his cabin. He was buried at sea later that day. He had expressed a clear wish to lie next to his wives in the Priory Church at Brecon, but it was not to be. However, for someone who had chosen to be so long homeless it seems fitting that he should lie in an unmarked grave beneath the waters of the Indian Ocean. His memorial is not in any church buildings named in his honour, but in the continuing causes to which he had given himself so unstintingly.

JOHN VICKERS

Notes

- ¹ 'Thomas Coke of Brecon (1747–1814)' in *Brycheiniog*, Vol. X (1964) pp. 1–13.
- ² John Wesley's *Journal*, 19 August 1777.
- ³ Notable examples of this were in the north of England; e.g. at Birstall and Dewsbury near Leeds and at North Shields. See my *Thomas Coke, Apostle of Methodism* (1969) pp. 53–8.
- ⁴ *Letters of The Rev. John Wesley, A.M.* (1931) Vol. VI p. 28.
- ⁵ For an abbreviated version of this important document, see *A History of the Methodist Church in Great Britain* Vol. 4 (1988) pp. 195–7.
- ⁶ See my *Thomas Coke*, pp. 237–9.
- ⁷ For Wesley's controversial ordinations and his 'consecration' of Coke, see *ibid*, pp. 68–78.
- ⁸ A collected edition of his Journals was published in London and Dublin in 1816, soon after his death. A new edition, edited by the present writer, was published by Abingdon Press, Nashville in 2005 and is the one cited here.
- ⁹ Coke's *Journal*, p. 61.
- ¹⁰ *Ibid*, p. 55.
- ¹¹ *Ibid*, pp. 63–4. For the Loyal Address, see my *Thomas Coke*, pp. 126–9.
- ¹² Coke's *Journal*, pp. 72–5.
- ¹³ *Ibid*, p. 75–6.
- ¹⁴ *Ibid*, p. 136.
- ¹⁵ See my *Thomas Coke*, pp. 169–72.
- ¹⁶ Particularly revealing is Coke's exchange of letters with the first effective Missionary Committee, appointed by the Conference in 1804. See my *Thomas Coke* pp. 273–86.
- ¹⁷ Letters to Thomas Williams: originals at Wesley's Chapel, London.
- ¹⁸ Original at Wesley's Chapel. Other surviving letters refer to the 'Shoulder of Mutton' inn, a few doors from Coke's birthplace and now identified as the birthplace of Sarah Siddons, née Kemble, whose landlord proved tardy in paying up.
- ¹⁹ *Life of William Wilberforce*, by his sons, vol. III pp. 389f.
- ²⁰ Jonathan Crowther, *Life of the Rev. Thomas Coke, LL.D.* (1815) pp. 233–4. For another version, in a letter from Adam Clarke, see the *Proceedings* of the Wesley Historical Society, vol.18 pp. 25–6.



CHANGE RINGING IN EASTERN BRECONSHIRE BEFORE THE FIRST WORLD WAR, WITH ESPECIAL REFERENCE TO PEAL RINGING AT GLASBURY

Introduction

This paper discusses the development of change ringing in eastern Breconshire before the start of the First World War in 1914, with special reference to peal ringing at Glasbury. Since the men who rang peals there, prior to that war, came from other towers as well as from Glasbury, brief mention is made of ringing at those towers and of members of those towers who rang peals at Glasbury. The towers discussed include Talgarth, Bronllys, Brecon, Llanelli (named Llanelly on Ordnance Survey maps) and Builth Wells, which were in the Diocese of St David's at that time, and centres in Herefordshire which were in the Diocese of Hereford. Attention is also paid to the role of the Hereford Diocesan Guild of Bellringers and of the peripatetic instructors employed by that Guild. An excellent introduction to ringing is provided by R. J. Johnston's *Bell-Ringing; the English Art of Change-Ringing* (Viking, 1986), while the web-site of the Central Council of Church Bell Ringers (www.cccbr.org.uk) is also informative.

Change ringing

Change ringing is the sounding of consecutive mathematical combinations on sets of bells hung for full-circle ringing, according to rules that evolved mainly in the seventeenth century.¹ The different ways in which changes may be produced are known as *methods* or *principles*. Methods include *Grandsire* and *Plain Bob* (Figure 1), each of which probably originated in the seventeenth century and may have been the products of Robert Roan, Keeper of the Green Pantry in the households of King Charles I and his son, King Charles II.² Principles differ from methods in that each bell follows the same pattern throughout a principle, unlike what happens in a method. The best known principle is *Stedman's* (Figure 1), the product, in the seventeenth century, of Fabian Stedman, son of a Vicar of Yarkhill in Herefordshire.^{3,4}

Peals and quarter-peals

The mark of a competent change-ringer is the ability to ring quarter-peals and peals. A peal is a set of 5040 mathematical combinations, or *changes*, rung non-stop and, on seven or more changing bells, without the repetition of any change. (Three consecutive changes might be, for example: 12345678/21354768/23145678). 5040 is the maximum number of mathematical combinations possible on seven numbers and it normally takes about three hours to ring all of them on tower bells.

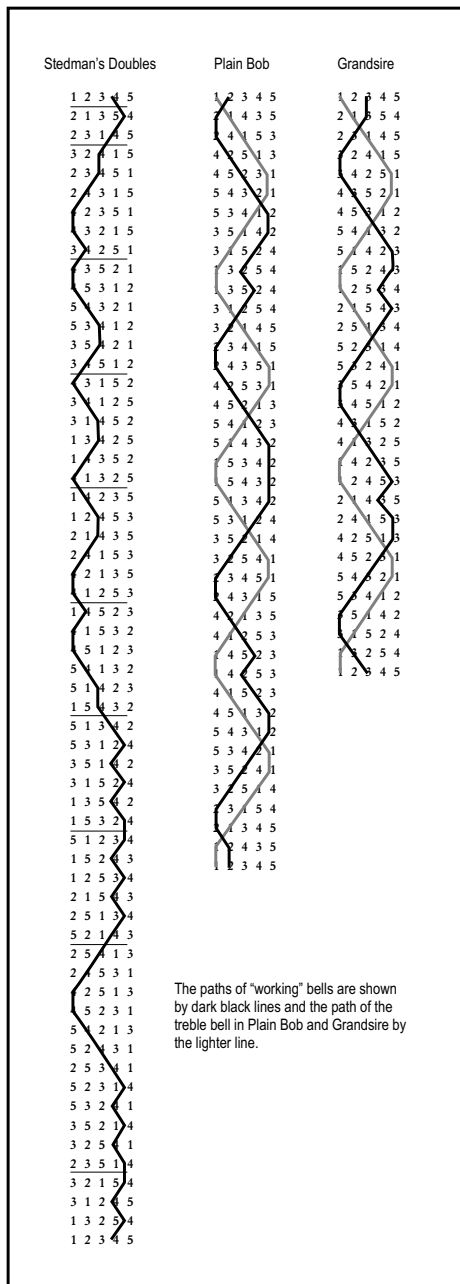


Figure 1 Examples of change ringing: the plain courses of two different Doubles methods: *Plain Bob* and *Grandsire*, and a Doubles principle: *Stedman's*. All three were first rung in the Seventeenth Century.

Changes on seven bells are known as *Triples*, preceded by the name of the method or principle that is rung. Normally, in Triples, an eighth bell sounds at the end of each change, rounding-off the music of the change.

On six bells, 720 changes are possible, and a peal usually consists of seven extents, each containing all 720 possible mathematical combinations. Nevertheless, it is permissible to ring more than 5040 changes in a peal and/or to ring blocks of changes exceeding an extent as long as they conform to stated rules. Changes on six bells are known as *Minor*, preceded by the name of the method.

On five bells, 120 changes are possible, and to ring a peal normally entails completing forty-two extents, each of all 120 combinations possible on five numbers. Changes on five bells are known as *Doubles*, preceded by the name of the method or principle being rung. A sixth bell usually sounds at the end of each change, as a *cover* bell, completing the music of the change, unless only five bells exist in the tower.

On eight or more changing bells, a peal consists of at least 5000 changes, none of which is repeated, rung non-stop.⁵

Unlike peals, for which the Central Council of Church Bell Ringers stipulates formal rules, there are no rules for quarter-peals, but they are generally accepted as being of 1260 changes, or slightly more.

The first peals in Breconshire

The first peal reported as rung in Breconshire was of Grandsire Triples, at St Mary's Brecon "in honour of the victory at Salamanca", according to a news report in *The Hereford Journal* of 9.9.1812. A second peal was, according to the same report, subsequently rung "at Llangoise, near Brecon". No names of the ringers, or other details, were given, and it is uncertain whether either "peal" was really rung. "Llangoise", presumably, is a misspelling for Llangors.

The first adequately documented peal in Breconshire was Grandsire Triples, rung at Llangatock (Llangatwg) on 31.8.1901. The second, also of Grandsire Triples, was at St Mary's Brecon on 1.1.1903. Further peals followed at Brecon before, on 23.3.1907, the first was rung at Talgarth. This was followed by peals at Builth Wells on 21.9.1907 and Glasbury on 2.11.1907. All three of the latter were of Grandsire Doubles, conducted by Louis S. Griffiths.⁶

Glasbury bells

A ring of six bells was cast by John Rudhall, of Gloucester, for St Peter's Church, Glasbury, c. 1792/3 (Figure 2).⁷ This church had been built on a new site, above the flood plain of the River Wye, following floods that damaged the previous church, of the same dedication, that had existed on the flood plain.⁸ The new church was consecrated on 29 June 1665.⁹

In June 1685, the Curate of St Peter's, Rev Lewis Jones, made depositions to the Consistory Court for the Archdeaconry of Brecon to the effect that six men, whom he named, drank "Ale or Beer" in the nave of the church "in an after none". Taken in conjunction with the churchwardens' presentment of 1714: that there were four bells at St Peter's; and the supposition that ringing, (at least in those days), was thirsty work; it has been suggested that the imbibers had been ringing the bells of the new church.¹⁰ There may, therefore, have been a ring of bells in the church prior to 1792/3.

By 1836, being capable "of containing only three hundred and twenty people", the 1665 church was deemed too small for the parish,¹¹ consequently another church was erected on the same site. This edifice was opened in May 1838¹² and consecrated on 13 November of that year (Figure 3).¹³ In the same year, Jefferies and Price of Bristol recast the Rudhall bells.¹⁴ They were opened by a band of ringers from Bristol later that year,¹⁵ but little change ringing appears to have been done on them until after Mears and Stainbank, of the Whitechapel Bellfoundry in London, recast the fifth bell in 1902, and added two trebles in 1903 that were dedicated on 9.11.1905 (Figure 4).¹⁶ Nevertheless, in 1898 and 1899 Glasbury ringers were members of the Hereford Diocesan Guild of Bellringers, which aimed to provide "education and training in change-ringing". Their membership then lapsed until 1906.¹⁷

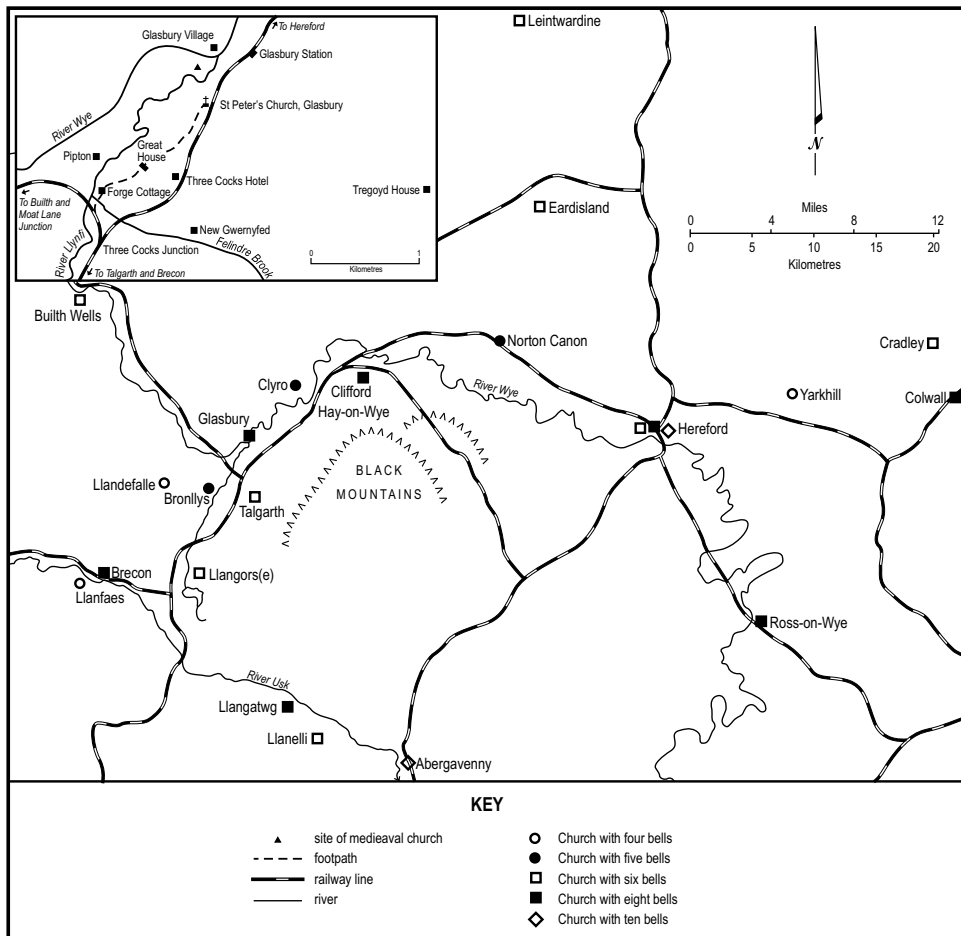


Figure 2 St Peter's Church Glasbury-on-Wye, in relation to other ringing centres discussed in the text, and to the local railway network. The number of bells hung for ringing in each centre *circa* 1910 is also shown on the main map, based on Sharpe, F., 1966–75, *The Church Bells of Herefordshire*, and Eisel, J. C., 2002, *The Church Bells of Breconshire*. The City of Hereford, centre of the Hereford Diocesan Guild of Bellringers, contained ringable peals of ten (Cathedral), eight (All Saints) and six (St Nicholas) bells. The ring of five bells at Clyro was cast by Henry Williams, the “Glasbury bellfounder”, in 1708. Three of these bells were recast in 1887 by John Warner and Sons of London (Sharpe, F., 1947, *The Church Bells of Radnorshire*, 22–23). Inset shows: Great House, The Forge Cottage, Three Cocks Junction and the footpath that linked them with St Peter's Church; Pipton; Three Cocks Hotel; New Gwernyfed (the mansion of the sporting Gwernyfed estate rented by Captain Kidston); Tregoyd House: seat of the Devereux family; and the site of the medieval St Peter's Church that was damaged by floods.

The first quarter-peal at Glasbury

The first quarter-peal known to have been rung at Glasbury was scored on 6.10.1907: Grandsire Doubles.¹⁸ The band was W. Pritchard of Talgarth (known locally as “Tall Bill Pritchard”); A. J. Griffiths of the adjoining parish of Bronllys, who worked as a stone mason for Bowen Builders of Bronllys; L. (Louis) S. Griffiths (conductor) of Talgarth, a carpenter who, among other achievements, made the seats for Bronllys church; J. Hammond, who was listed as a member of the Glasbury band in 1905 and who may have been the John Hammond listed in the *Hereford Diocesan Guild of Bellringers* report as Tower Captain at Eardisland in 1908; W. D. Griffiths of Talgarth, (brother of L. S. Griffiths), who was also a carpenter, specialising in restoring furniture, who made the floor of the ringing chamber in Talgarth and its wooden panelling; and H. Harrison of Talgarth.^{19, 20, 21}



Figure 3 St Peter's Church, Glasbury, as it looked at the end of the Nineteenth Century, during the early years of change ringing on the Jefferies and Price bells, hung in the pinnacled tower.



Figure 4 View inside Glasbury bell chamber with bells inverted, ready for ringing, February 2009. Four of the eight bells are in sight, plus the wheels of two other bells. The two bells cast in 1903 are out of view, to the right of the others. The bells shown were cast by Jefferies and Price of Bristol in 1838. The frame and fittings were installed in 1999 when the bells were rehung by Nicholson Engineering of Lyme Regis.

Talgarth ringers participated in most of the early peals at Glasbury, so that the history of peal ringing at Glasbury before the First World War is intimately linked with the history of Talgarth bells and, especially, with the change ringers attached to that tower in the early years of the Twentieth Century. The development of change ringing at both towers, as elsewhere in eastern Breconshire, was due largely to teaching given by peripatetic instructors employed by the Hereford Diocesan Guild of Bellringers.

Peripatetic instructors and the Hereford Diocesan Guild of Bellringers

The Diocese of St David's, in the early years of the Twentieth Century, abutted against that of Hereford along the border between England and Wales immediately east of Hay-on-Wye. Strong cultural links existed between many parishes in the Diocese of St David's and the Diocese of Hereford. These were particularly strong in relation to bell-ringing, and from 1886 until 1914, instruction in the increasingly popular form known as change ringing was given in at least eastern areas of St David's Diocese by peripatetic instructors employed by the Hereford Diocesan Guild of Bellringers. The Guild had been founded in 1886 at the instigation of the incumbent of Colwall, the Rev. G. M. Custance, who was already a change ringer.

His son, Arthur F. M. Custance, who was to play an important role in the development of the Guild, was also a change ringer and had been a lively undergraduate at Oxford, which was a leading centre of change ringing.^{22a, b}

Talgarth bells

The six bells in Talgarth, which had been cast by Abraham Rudhall II of Gloucester in 1724,²³ were rehung, in a new wooden frame, by Greenleaf and Tristram of Hereford, in 1904.²⁴ At that time the second was recast by Barwells of Birmingham.²⁵ The bells had previously been silent “nearly 30 years”. The rehung bells were dedicated by The Bishop of St David’s on 27.3.1905, in the presence of Archdeacon Bevan and the Vicars of Talgarth and Llandefalle (Figure 5).²⁶

Talgarth ringers and the first peal on Talgarth bells

Talgarth bells were rung for the dedication service by D. Parry, W. Pritchard, C. Powell, J. C. Davies, L. Griffiths, W. D. Griffiths (Captain) and W. P. Weale.²⁷ The Talgarth men, benefitting from the teaching of the Hereford Diocesan Guild’s peripatetic instructors, soon put their bells to good effect. On 23.3.1907 they rang what a carved wooden peal board, in the ringing chamber, records as the first peal



Figure 5 Talgarth ringers at the rededication of the rehung bells of St Gwendoline’s Church, 17 March, 1905. The ringers, in the back row (left to right) were: D. Parry, W. Pritchard, C. Powell, J. C. Davies, L. Griffiths, W. D. Griffiths (Captain), W. P. Weale. In the front row were: The Vicar of Talgarth (Rev. D. Lewis Davies), The Venerable Archdeacon Bevan, The Lord Bishop of St David’s, Reverend G. Griffiths (Vicar of Llandefalle).



Figure 6 Photograph of the wooden peal board erected to commemorate the first peal at Talgarth, 23 March 1907. The photograph also shows the ringers of bells 1, 2 and 3 on the left, in order from top to bottom, and of bells 4, 5 and 6 on the right, in order from top to bottom.

on the bells: Grandsire Doubles (Figure 6). The band was: W. Pritchard (1), W. D. Griffiths (2), Rev J. T. Davies (3), L. S. Griffiths (conductor, 4), R. Moy (5), H. Harrison (6).²⁸

Moy had previously rung in Brecon, where he was photographed in 1900–1 as a member of the band at St Mary’s Church (Figure 7).²⁹ He seems to have joined the Talgarth band after moving to that town, where he opened a draper’s shop.³⁰

Change ringing at Brecon in the early 1900s

There was a good change-ringing band in Brecon in the early 1900s (Figure 7), seven of whom stood in a peal of Grandsire Triples at St Mary’s on 29.10.1904, conducted by the Hereford Diocesan Guild instructor: J. E. Groves. Groves was one “of the best ringers of the time” and stood in the record length peal of 11,111 Stedman Cinques, rung on twelve bells at St Martin’s Church in Birmingham on 26.12.1901 in eight hours and two minutes.³¹

The peal ringers at Brecon were: S. Watkins 1, S. Brookes 2, J. E. Groves (conductor) 3, G. Hardwick 4, R. Moy 5, W. Evans 6, W. Hargest 7, D. Price 8. The composition was Rev C. D. P. Davies’ five-part, which was rung in three hours and three minutes, and the peal was published as the “First Peal by the Brecon



Figure 7 The ringers of St Mary’s Church, Brecon, 1900–1. Back row, left to right: W. Evans, R. Griffiths, D. Price, R. Moy. Front row, left to right: G. Hardwick, T. Watkins, F. Griffiths, L. Brooks.

Ringers”, in spite of the fact that the conductor was not a Brecon ringer. Two years later, on 11.10.1906, the Brecon men rang a peal of Grandsire Triples entirely on their own, the band being Samuel Watkins 1, William Evans (conductor) 2, George Giblin 3, Samuel Brookes 4, Frederick Steadman 5, William Hargest 6, George Hardwick 7, David Price 8. The peal took three hours and nine minutes and was Holt’s ten-part composition. The footnote published with the peal read: “First Peal by an entirely local band and was successful at the third attempt”. This was Evans’ first peal as conductor.³²

The first peal at Builth Wells

On 21.9.1907 Talgarth and Bronllys ringers, joined by William Evans from Brecon, rang the first peal on the bells of St Mary’s Church, Builth Wells. These bells had been rehung, and their frame reinforced, in 1904. The band was William Pritchard, Louis S. Griffiths, Arthur J. Griffiths, William Evans, William D. Griffiths and Henry Harrison. Louis Griffiths was the conductor and the method was Grandsire Doubles.³³ William Evans, leader of the Brecon ringers, was a saddler with a shop in Ship Street in Brecon. Evans died in 1937 and is buried in the churchyard at Llanfaes.³⁴ The band presumably travelled from Talgarth and, in the case of William Evans, from Brecon, to Builth by train. Whether they changed trains at Three Cocks Junction (Figure 2) is unknown.

Peals at Glasbury

The first peal at Glasbury

The first peal at Glasbury was rung two months after the first peal at Builth Wells when, on 23.11.1907, Louis Griffiths called a peal of Grandsire Doubles on the back six bells at Glasbury in two hours and forty-seven minutes. The band was William Pritchard (1), Louis S. Griffiths (conductor, 2), Arthur J. Griffiths (3), William Evans (4), William D. Griffiths (5), John Hammond (6).³⁵ Hammond was the only Glasbury ringer. Three other members of the band (L. S. Griffiths, William Pritchard and William D. Griffiths) were from Talgarth. Arthur J. Griffiths was from Bronllys and William Evans was from Brecon.

The first peal on all eight bells at Glasbury

On 9.1.1908 the first peal on all eight bells was rung at Glasbury, conducted by William Short (Figure 8).³⁶ At that time, Short, who like James E. Groves had rung in the record peal of Stedman Cinques in Birmingham on 26.12.1901, was employed as a peripatetic teacher of change ringing by the Hereford Diocesan Guild, and it is significant that all the peals described in this article were rung for that Guild.³⁷ Had it not been for missionary work by the Hereford Guild in teaching change ringing, it is unlikely that such ringing would have been practiced in the Glasbury/Talgarth/ Bronllys/ Builth/ Brecon area in the early Twentieth Century.

Short called James E. Groves' variation of J. J. Parker's twelve-part composition of Grandsire Triples and the band included Louis S. Griffiths and William D. Griffiths from Talgarth; William Evans, George Giblin and William Hargest from Brecon; Charles L. Sadler from Leintwardine; and Arthur Hadley of Cradley. The peal is commemorated by a wooden peal board carved by Louis S. Griffiths, which hangs in the ringing chamber in St Peter's Church.

Arthur Hadley stood in the first peal in seven Treble Bob Minor methods known to have been rung in Herefordshire, which was scored on 6.2.1909. This peal, in relatively complicated methods, was a major achievement at that time, so Hadley was obviously a keen and competent change-ringer. Sadler, who had learnt to ring at Ross-on-Wye in 1896, had taken up residence in Leintwardine in 1906, where he had a grocery business. He taught the local band there to ring Grandsire Doubles and Plain Bob Minor and, by 1908, Canterbury Pleasure Bob Minor.³⁹

The first peals at Glasbury with more than one local ringer in them

The first peal at Glasbury to include more than one local ringer appears to have been that of 14.3.1909, when Leonard Lewis and Edgar Jones rang the treble and third respectively.⁴⁰ This was their first peal: William Short rang the second (and presumably kept an eye on them). The conductor, who rang the fifth and called forty-two six-scores of Grandsire Doubles in two hours and fifty minutes, was William D. Griffiths. His brother, Louis S. Griffiths, rang the fourth. Both were Talgarth ringers. William Drew, who covered for the Glasbury peal, was from Bronllys and, like A. Griffiths who rang in the first quarter and in the first peal at Glasbury, was photographed as a member of the Bronllys band c.1903.⁴¹ (Figure 9). Drew's next peal was in 1940 and was the second peal at Bronllys, where the bells had been augmented from five to six in 1939. According to framed records in the ringing chamber at Bronllys, David H. Bennett, then the Tower Captain at Talgarth, conducted the first three peals there, the first of which was rung on 6.5.1939 and included James Hyett of the Glasbury band.

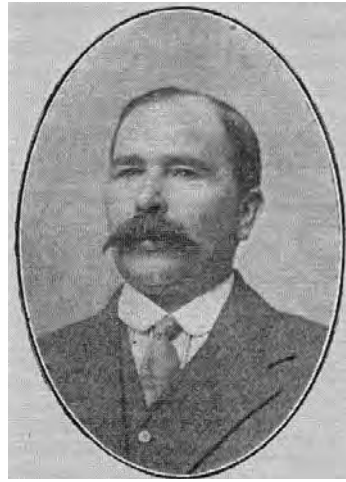


Figure 8 William Short (1868–1950), conductor of the first peal on all eight bells at Glasbury, rung on 9.1.1908. Short was taught to ring in 1887, at Clent in Worcestershire. He rang his first peal the following year. Short's first peal as conductor was in 1889. In 1901 he rang in the first true peal of Royal (on ten bells) in Ireland, at St Patrick's Cathedral in Dublin. In 1902 he was appointed instructor to the Hereford Diocesan Guild. Between then and the outbreak of the First World War in 1914 "he taught change ringing to upwards of 80 bands".³⁸



Figure 9 The ringers of St Mary's Church, Bronllys: *circa* 1903. Back row, left to right: F. Davies, A. Griffiths, D. A. Williams, E. W. Davies. Front row, left to right: J. Owens, W. Davies, W. Drew, W. Bevan.

On 26.3.1909 a further peal of Grandsire Doubles by local and other ringers was scored at Glasbury in two hours and fifty minutes, conducted by Louis Griffiths and with William Short on the fourth. This was the first peal for three of the band and the first “with a bob bell” for another ringer.⁴² At least two of these “firsts” were Glasbury ringers (Arthur G. Arnold, who rang the treble, and Leonard Lewis, who rang the third).⁴³

The first peal by the local band at Glasbury

The first peal rung by the local band at Glasbury, and the sixth peal on the bells, was scored on Wednesday, 27.9.1911. The band was John N. Vizer 1, Arthur G. Arnold 2, Leonard Lewis (conductor) 3, James P. Hyett 4, Edgar R. Jones 5, Thomas Turner 6. Hyett, who was born in 1872, began ringing at Norton Canon in 1904. He joined the Clifford band in 1905 and was affiliated to Glasbury in 1910.⁴⁴ The group photograph of the band (Figure 10), which hangs in the ringing chamber at St Peter's Church, was taken on the steps in front of the tower and includes two other Glasbury ringers: Edward Pugh and Thomas Vaughan. Vaughan became Tower Captain at Glasbury after the Second World War and held that post until, in the 1960s, he was replaced by Eric J. Smith.

The Honourable R. C. Devereux stood on the left in the back row of the photograph. He was obviously delighted with the achievement of the band. The estate of the Earl of Hereford (the Devereux family) was based on Tregoyd House, in Glasbury parish, and estate workers were encouraged to sing in the choir and/or ring bells at St Peter's Church! Next to Devereux stood the Vicar of Glasbury, the Reverend H. H. Gibbon. He was installed as incumbent in 1883 and, on his retirement in 1926, was described as "A great campanologist, he was to be found with the men in the belfry both on Sunday and weekdays".⁴⁵ Captain A. Glen Kidston stood to the left of the Vicar. Kidston had been an officer in a Scottish regiment and was a man of substantial private means who was then renting the sporting Gwernyfed Estate, formerly the seat of the Williams family.⁴⁶

The influence of Captain Glen Kidston

Captain Glen Kidston was a keen supporter of the ringers. After the conclusion of a peal of Grandsire Triples on 24.1.1910, the first on the bells after they had been "put in thorough going order by Messrs. Greenleaf and Tristram, of Hereford",



Figure 10 The band who rang the first local peal on the bells of St Peter's Church, Glasbury-on-Wye, Sept. 27th, 1911, conducted by Leonard Lewis. The peal ringers are in their shirt sleeves. Back row, left to right: The Honourable R. C. Devereux, The Reverend H. H. Gibbon, Captain A. Glen Kidston. Middle row, left to right: (?) John N. Vizor, (?) Arthur G. Arnold, (?) Leonard Lewis. Front row, left to right: Edward Pugh, (?) James P. Hyett, (?) Edgar R. Jones, (?) Thomas Turner, Thomas Vaughan.

Kidston entertained the ringers “and others of the local band”, to supper at The Three Cocks Hotel.⁴⁷ Incidentally, William Greenleaf, who undertook at least 59 bell-hanging and/or repair contracts while based in Hereford from 1894 until 1910, subsequently emigrated to New Zealand, where he died, aged seventy-two, in 1921.⁴⁸ Greenleaf was a talented ringer and took part in the then record length of Stedman Caters (11,111), rung on ten bells and scored by the College Youths at Fulham on 8.12.1883.⁴⁹

In 1912 Kidston’s “generosity enabled the Hereford Guild to hold a ringing competition at Glasbury”, open to all towers in union with the Hereford Guild. Twelve bands competed, and Kidston paid their travelling expenses and provided lunch for all of them, at which he presided.⁵⁰

After Kidston’s untimely death on 2.9.1913, aged forty two, he was buried at Glasbury on 5.9.1913, his coffin carried to the church by “11 of the gamekeepers from his estate, followed by the family mourners and 35 servants”.⁵¹ On the same day, a peal of Grandsire Doubles was rung at Glasbury, half-muffled, in three hours and twenty-one minutes: “as a tribute to the memory of the late Captain Kidston, a munificent benefactor of the local ringers”.⁵²

Half-muffled ringing

Half-muffled ringing is when one side of the clappers is covered with leather or some other muffle, so that the bells alternately sound loud and then soft, open and then muffled. Traditionally, half-muffled ringing is done very slowly, so that it sounds solemn and stately. The slowest peal at Glasbury was rung, half-muffled, in three hours and twenty-three minutes, on 4.1.1920 in honour of local ringers who were killed in the 1914–18 war. Edward (Ted) Pugh, who rang in that peal, remembered it with awe over thirty years later and told the author that it was “a good and memorable peal”.

Tea at Great House after a peal at Glasbury

The band that rang a peal of Plain Bob and Grandsire Doubles at Glasbury on 14.6.1914 included John H. and Sidney T. Rackham and Ivor Doman,⁵³ all of whom were members of the band at Llanelli, near Abergavenny.⁵⁴ This was Doman’s first peal: he died in 1919 and a half-muffled peal in his memory was rung at Llanelli on 20.1.1919.⁵⁵ The Rackhams, who were corn millers,⁵⁶ taught many people to ring at Llanelli, including Wilfred Williams, who, in the 1950s, conducted what was then arguably the world’s leading peal band.⁵⁷

Thomas Vaughan, who claimed to have learnt to handle a bell at Llandefalle and who was a Glasbury ringer, rang the treble in the 1914 peal, which was his “First peal away from the tenor.”⁵⁸ The peal was conducted by S. T. Rackham. James P. Hyett, a signalman at Hay station and a member of the bands at Glasbury and Clifford, rang the third. Edgar R. Jones, a Glasbury ringer, handled the second.

A note published with the 1914 peal in *The Bell News and Ringers' Record* of 27.6.1914, states that: "The ringers wish to heartily thank Mr. and Mrs. Jones of Great House, for entertaining them to tea after the peal". Great House is on the way, by footpath, between St Peter's Church, Glasbury, and Three Cocks Junction, where the visiting ringers presumably caught a train for home (Figure 2). After a peal lasting two hours and forty-eight minutes, they probably felt in need of refreshment!

Henry Williams: the Glasbury bell-founder/s

The visitors may have passed the site of the foundry of Henry Williams, who died in 1721/2, near the confluence of the Velindre Brook with the Llynfi, on their way from Great House to the station at Three Cocks Junction.⁵⁹ Although in Aberllynfi parish, the establishment was adjacent to the small settlement of Pipton, and has been described as the Pipton works.⁶⁰ This was essentially an iron-forge and, together with the Brecon Ironworks, produced "some thirty per cent of the total [iron] output of South Wales" in the 1720s.⁶¹

Henry Williams, or possibly two generations of metal workers of the same name who lived in the Glasbury/Clyro area, occasionally cast bells.⁶² Between 1677 and 1719 at least thirty-two Williams' bells were produced. Another founder, who used one of the same borders on his bells as did Henry Williams, adding the initials TP, cast at least three more in 1738 and 1740 and is regarded as William's successor.⁶³

On 7.3.1721/2, the day before he died, Henry Williams made an indenture by which he "let to Benjamin Tanner and Richard Wellington . . . the Forge in the parish of Aberllynfi, and a certain wear across the Llynfi".⁶⁴ Benjamin Tanner was described in a lease of property near Brecon in 1722 as an Ironmonger of Brecon, while Richard Wellington, of Hay, was described as a Gentleman.⁶⁵ Presumably Wellington's interest in the forge in Aberllynfi parish was that of an investor rather than of an Ironmonger who participated in the working of the forge.

An economic historian has written that "the Pipton forge [was] on the Llynfi in the parish of Aberllynfi, near Glasbury" and that, "from its foundation about 1722", it obtained its pig iron from the Brecon furnace. Furthermore, the forge "was sometimes known as Tanner's forge".⁶⁶ This suggests that the letters "T P" cast on bells by Williams' successor, represent Tanner (T) and the Pipton forge (P), with Tanner being the bell founder. His bells, like those of Williams, were, of course, cast in bronze! The Forge Cottage (Figure 11), now ruined, was still inhabited in the mid-twentieth century.⁶⁷

Three Cocks Junction, and the Hereford/Brecon and Brecon/Moat Lane railway lines were closed in 1962 and trains, like the local casting and tuning of bells, and peal ringing by the local band, are no more than fading memories in the Glasbury area nowadays.



Figure 11 The Forge Cottage, Aberllynfi, in the 1950s, photographed by Mr Jack Pettican. This is where Henry Williams, the Glasbury bellfounder who died in 1721/2, is thought to have lived in his latter years. The remains of the forge/furnace are located some metres upstream of the cottage, near the confluence of the Velindre Brook with the River Llynfi.

Photo courtesy of Talgarth Historical Society: Jack Pettican Collection.

Conclusion

The history of peal ringing at Glasbury, in eastern Breconshire, before the First World War (1914–18), evidences co-operation between Glasbury ringers and those of Talgarth, Bronllys, Brecon and other centres (including some in Herefordshire) that were accessible to Glasbury mainly by rail. Peripatetic instructors taught change ringing at those localities, and were appointed and paid by the Hereford Diocesan Guild. The spread of change ringing in the early twentieth century in the Glasbury/Brecon area, as in the Diocese of Hereford itself, was largely due to the work of those dedicated teachers. The importance of support given to ringers by clergy and influential lay-members of Glasbury and other parishes, is also evident. Unfortunately little is known of the social background of many of the ringers mentioned in this paper and further research is needed to place them, and ringing itself, in its societal context.

Acknowledgements

The author thanks Dr J. C. Eisel for his great support and help with archival research and for allowing him to reproduce the photograph of William Short from his book: *Giants of the Exercise II*; Messrs Brian Collins, Michael East, Malcolm Johns and Lloyd Evans (some-time Tower Captains of Glasbury, Talgarth, St Mary's Brecon, and Bronllys, respectively) for allowing him to reproduce photographs from the archives of those towers; Talgarth Historical Society for permission to reproduce Mr Jack Pettican's photograph of Forge Cottage; Malcolm Johns, Philip Saunders and the late Margaret James for verbal information on ringers named in this paper; Dr Margaret Gill for scanning photographs and other documents; Ms Bronwyn Mclean for cartographic assistance; and the Reverend Dr John Baldwin, Marijke Lewis (his wife), Dr Eisel, Professor Randall Hepburn, Mr William Jervis and the editor of *Brycheiniog* (Mr Brynach Parri) for reading and commenting on earlier versions of this paper.

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Notes

¹ Eisel, J. C., 1987. 'The development of change ringing in the Seventeenth Century', in Sanderson, J. (General Editor), *Change ringing: the history of an English Art*, Central Council of Church Bell Ringers, Guildford, 40–49.

² Trollope, J. A., 1948. *Grandsire*, Leeds, 117–119.

³ Trollope, J. A., 1938. *Stedman*, Leeds, 96–127.

⁴ Fortey, A. C., 2008. 'The dream of Yarkhill', *The Ringing World*, 503 (5.12.2008), 11245–52.

⁵ *The decisions of the Central Council, (D) Peal Ringing*. www.cccbr.org.uk/decisions/#decDD (accessed 3.1.2009).

⁶ Eisel, J. C., 2002. *The church bells of Breconshire*, Logaston Press, Almeley, 26–7, 30, 48, 98; Hereford Diocesan Guild of Bellringers Reports, for 1904 (published 1905), 16, and 1906 (published 1907), 17. (Brecon peals of 1904 and 1906).

⁷ Eisel, J. C., 2002. *op. cit.*, 47.

⁸ Petition to Bishop of St David's. Text in Williams, J., 1870. 'Some particulars concerning the Parish of Glasbury', *Archaeologia Cambrensis*, 1, 306–323.

⁹ Williams, *op. cit.*, 319; Wood, T. 1904. *The Registers of Glasbury, Breconshire, 1660–1836*. Parish Register Society, London, viii.

¹⁰ Gill, M. A. V., 2006. 'Concerning some early Radnorshire bell-ringers: evidence from the churches of the Wye Valley Group', *Transactions of the Radnorshire Society*, 76, 76–87; Gill, M. A. V., 2001. 'Parish church of St Cynidr & St Peter at Glabury-on-Wye: bells and bell-frames', *Transactions of the Radnorshire Society*, 71, 56–81.

¹¹ Williams, *op. cit.*, 323.

¹² Lewis, S., 1842. *A topographical dictionary of Wales*, London, 383.

¹³ National Library of Wales, SD/C/83s (d), Diocese of St David's, draft of Act of Consecration.

¹⁴ Eisel, *op. cit.*, 45.

¹⁵ Lewis, C. A., 1979. 'Glasbury-on-Wye bells and ringers, 1838–1979', *The Ringing World*, (14th and 21st–28th.12.1979), 1068 and 1099.

¹⁶ Eisel, *op. cit.*, 47.

¹⁷ Annual Reports, the Hereford Diocesan Guild of Bellringers, 1898–1906. (Available in the Library of the Central Council of Church Bell Ringers).

¹⁸ *The Bell News and Ringers' Record*, 2.11.1907, 394.

¹⁹ Names of ringers from *ibid.*, 30.11.1907, 440. Information on Hammond being a Glasbury ringer from Lewis, C. A. 1979, *op. cit.*

²⁰ Verbal information about the ringers from Margaret James, whose brothers were ringers in Glasbury. Personal communication, 2005.

²¹ Information about the floor and panelling in the ringing chamber at Talgarth from a handwritten note on the back of the photograph of 'Talgarth Church Bell Ringers 1905' that hangs in the ringing chamber of St Gwendoline's Church, Talgarth. The note appears to be in the writing of Bill Speake, who reframed the photograph in 1989. The note adds: 'The steps up to the belfry were repaired by Wm Pritchard in 1937'. This photograph is reproduced as Figure 5.

^{22a} Eisel, J. C. 1988. 'Change ringing in Hereford Diocese in the Nineteenth Century and the early years of the Hereford Diocesan Guild', *The Ringing World*, 4018 (29.4.1988), 409; 4020 (3.5.1988), 458; 4024 (10.6.1988), 548; 4026 (26.6.1988), 596; 4028 (8.7.1988), 651–2; 4031 (29.7.1988), 722–3. Eisel, J. C., 1990. *The Hereford Diocesan Guild of Bellringers 1886–1986*. Unpublished typescript, v+69 pp, 15ff.

^{22b} Spice, J., 1997. *The Oxford University Society of Change Ringers 1872–1997*. Carnegie Publishing, Preston, 40ff.

²³ Eisel, J. C., 2002. *op. cit.*, 98.

²⁴ *ibid.*, 98.

²⁵ *ibid.*, 98.

²⁶ Caption to photograph in ringing chamber of St Gwendoline's Church, Talgarth, entitled 'Talgarth Church Bell Ringers 1905'.

²⁷ Caption to photograph, *op. cit.*

²⁸ Eisel, J. C. 2002. *op. cit.*, 98, incorrectly names Louis S. Griffiths as Lewis S. Griffiths: his name is shown only as L S Griffiths on the peal board and in the relevant *Bell News* report.

²⁹ Photograph in ringing chamber of St Mary's Church, Brecon, entitled 'Bellringers, St Mary's Church, Brecon, 1900–1', reproduced as Figure 7.

³⁰ Personal communication from Malcolm Johns, Brecknock Museum, Brecon, December 2008.

³¹ Regan, M., 2009. 'Reflections on the record peals of Stedman Cinques', *The Ringing World*, 5104 (20.2.2009), 173.

³² Eisel, J. C., 1990. *op. cit.*, page 30 discusses the Brecon band. Peal details are from the 1905 and the 1907 *Hereford Diocesan Guild of Bellringers Reports*, for 1904 and for 1906, p 16 and p 17 respectively.

³³ Eisel, J. C., 2002. *op. cit.*, 30

³⁴ Personal communication, Malcolm Johns, December 2008.

³⁵ *The Bell News and Ringers' Record*, 30.11.1907, 440.

³⁶ *The Bell News and Ringers' Record*, 25.1.1908, 536.

³⁷ Eisel, J. C., 2006. *Giants of the Exercise II*, Central Council of Church Bell Ringers, N.P., 44–47.

³⁸ *ibid.*, 46.

³⁹ Information on tower affiliations of the ringers from annual reports of the Hereford Diocesan Guild, courtesy of Dr J. C. Eisel, *ditto* on peal in seven Treble Bob Minor methods; information on Sadler from Eisel, J. C., 1990, *op. cit.*, 27 and 31.

⁴⁰ *The Bell News and Ringers' Records*, 27.3.1909, 69.

⁴¹ Shown and named on photograph in the ringing chamber, St Mary's Church, Bronllys, entitled 'Bronllys Church Bellringers (about 1903)', reproduced as Figure 8.

⁴² *The Bell News and Ringers' Records*, 21.8.1909, 319.

⁴³ Personal communication from Margaret James, 2005.

⁴⁴ Eisel, J. C., 1990. *op. cit.*, 34.

⁴⁵ *Brecon County Times*, 11.11.1926.

- ⁴⁶ Eisel, J. C., 2001. 'The Glen Kidston Trophy', *The Ringing World*, 4722 (26.10.2001), 1065–6.
- ⁴⁷ *The Bell News and Ringers' Records*, 5.3.1910, 55.
- ⁴⁸ Eisel, J. C., 1989. 'William Greenleaf', *Transactions of the Woolhope Naturalists' Field Club*, 46, (2), 308–317.
- ⁴⁹ Cook, W. T. 1987. *The Society of College Youths 1637–1987*. The Ancient Society of College Youths, London, 88.
- ⁵⁰ 'Ringing competition at Glasbury', *The Bell News and Ringers' Records*, 1.6.1912, 172.
- ⁵¹ Eisel, J. C., 2001, *op. cit.*, 1065.
- ⁵² *The Bell News and Ringers' Record*, 20.9.1913, 343.
- ⁵³ *ibid.*, 27.6.1914 gives the date as 7.6.1914, the *Peal Book* of the Hereford Diocesan Guild of Bellringers as 14.6.1914.
- ⁵⁴ *Annual Report, Hereford Diocesan Guild of Bellringers, 1914*. (Published in 1915), 14.
- ⁵⁵ *Report of the Hereford Diocesan Guild of Bellringers from 19.6.1919 to 31.12.1920*, 21.
- ⁵⁶ Verbal information from Philip Saunders, January 2009.
- ⁵⁷ Clift, D. G., 1986. 'Wilfred Williams 1905–1986', *The Ringing World*, 3929 (15.8.1986), 712–4; Pipe, G., *ibid.*, 714; Cook, W. T., 1987. *op. cit.*, 108.
- ⁵⁸ Verbal information from Thomas Vaughan, 1958.
- ⁵⁹ Site identified by author from information in William's will and subsequent Indenture (*vide* reference 64).
- ⁶⁰ Jepson, U., 1996–7. 'The Brecon Ironworks', *Brycheiniog*, 29, 47–51.
- ⁶¹ *ibid.*, 47.
- ⁶² Gill, 2006. *op. cit.*, 82.
- ⁶³ Eisel, J. C., 2002. *op. cit.*, 112.
- ⁶⁴ Dawson, M. L., 1918. 'Notes on the history of Glasbury', *Archaeologia Cambrensis*, 43, 6–34 and 279–319, *vide* p. 298.
- ⁶⁵ Jepson, *op. cit.*, 48.
- ⁶⁶ Minchinton, W. E., 1961. 'The place of Brecknock in the industrialization of South Wales', *Brycheiniog*, 7, 1–70, *vide* p. 12.
- ⁶⁷ The author visited the house with his father, The Reverend E. T. D. Lewis, during parochial visiting in the 1950s.

Addendum

The first peal at Clyro, in Radnorshire, but in 2010 in the same Wye Valley Parishes grouping as Glasbury, was rung on 23.5.1908. The band was the same as rang the first peal at Glasbury, with the exclusion of John Hammond (there being only five bells at Clyro). No other peals were rung at Clyro before the First World War. Information from Hereford Diocesan Guild of Bellringers Manuscript Peal Book, courtesy of Mr Neil Bennet, Peal Recorder for that Guild, and from the Felstead Database (www.cccbr.org.uk/festead//tbid.php?tid+1218) accessed on 5.2.2010.

BRECKNOCK BELLS

'Tis pleasant by Usk water
When Brecknock bells ring round,
Their melody like laughter,
So joyous is the sound!

Merrily, merrily forth
On the wings of the wind they go,
They care not if to the North
Or if to the South it blow.

They have no special mission,
No otherwise are heard,
Than with all expedition
To scatter pleasure round:

The cause that sets them going
At each particular time,
I heed not of, well knowing
'Tis gladness prompts the chime.

It may be folks are married
Who long for love were lorn,
A lawsuit has been carried,
A son and heir been born,

Or wanting relaxation
A Member fresh from Town –
Hard work that legislation!
It almost breaks them down.

Aside conjecture flinging
I joy no whit the less,
Assured the cause for ringing
Is some one's happiness.

JOHN LLOYD, esquire, 1865

THE TREFECA MERIDIAN

JOSEPH HARRIS'S ACCOUNT OF THE TRANSIT OF VENUS OVER THE SUN 6TH JUNE 1761

Introduction

The eighteenth century was the age of the Natural Philosopher. Science was indivisible, and its practitioners ranged across all of what we now see as specialist subjects: mathematics, astronomy, navigation, optics, chemistry, economics, and the nature of the Universe. This was ground for the polymath, and among the greatest of the era was a man from Trefeca, Joseph Harris, now almost unknown.

The family of Howell ap Howell, a carpenter who had moved from Llangadog, Carmarthen, to Trefeca, and his wife, Susannah Powell of Trefeca, consisted of three sons, Joseph, Thomas and Howell, who survived to maturity, unlike two other children, Anne and another Thomas. Early on in the marriage the family name changed to Harris. Joseph Harris became the King's Assay Master at the Royal Mint; Thomas Harris made his fortune as a tailor and supplier of army uniforms; Howell Harris became the Apostle of Wales.

There is a slight mystery over the date of Joseph's birth. Lacking a formal system to register a birth, the relevant date usually taken is that of baptism, in Joseph's case 16th February 1704. But the baptism of Anne, his short-lived sister, on September 9th of the same year suggests Joseph's baptism to have been not immediately after his birth, while a commemorative plaque in Talgarth church (placed perhaps by his middle brother Thomas) suggests that he was born in 1702. The authorities are almost equally divided between those who date him 1702–1764 and those who date him 1704–1764, and this can confuse the researcher. It also makes me hesitate to give an age at which he did things.

Joseph was clearly known early to be brilliant, and was given a good education about which we know little, except that he learned (or taught himself) mathematics, Latin and Greek. He became a protégé of an eminent local family, that of Member of Parliament Roger Jones of Buckland and of Thomas Jones II of Tredustan, but despite that, he was apprenticed locally to his mother's brother as a blacksmith, as befitted a lad from a humble background. Nonetheless, when, in January 1725, he went to live in London, he took with him enthusiastic letters of introduction from Roger Jones of Buckland to, among others, Edmund Halley, the Astronomer Royal. It was soon after his arrival in London (so soon that it may have been arranged

before he left Trefeca) that he was employed on a voyage to Vera Cruz on the South Seas Company ship *The Prince Frederick*, departing 12th June. That voyage led firstly to the appearance in the Royal Society's *Transactions* of 1727/28 of an account by him of a partial eclipse of the sun seen in Vera Cruz, and then in 1730 to the publication of his first book *A Treatise of Navigation*, dedicated to the Lords of the Admiralty and making suggestions on important improvements to the instruments used and the training given to sailors. Three other books followed.

One of the most important problems of the century for ships of the seafaring trading nation Britain had become was to find a reliable way to establish longitude. Latitude was settled more easily because it depended upon knowledge of the positions of the stars, especially, in the northern part of the globe, the Pole Star. But longitude required mechanical, reliable, timekeeping to a degree of accuracy that was a major preoccupation of Joseph's era, a preoccupation finally resolved by the development of Harrison's chronometer, detailed in Dava Sobel's book *Longitude* (1995). Every place had its own time, set by the calculation of midday (*meridies* 'midday') when the sun was at its highest point in the sky there, the further west the later because the sun travels from east to west. Local watches would be co-ordinated on the local midday, sometimes defined by a meridian line, so that everyone roundabout worked to the same, local, point in time. How Joseph did this at Trefeca is the first stage of his *Account of the late Transit of Venus over the Sun*.

The second part of Joseph's *Account*, the timing and length of the transit of the planet Venus over the face of the sun was, on the other hand, part of a great international project. In anticipation of the transit of 1761 June 6th astronomers had undertaken to spread out across the world to observe it; the differing locations would give astronomers invaluable comparative information, parallaxes, to help understand the sizes, orbits and distances of the sun, the planets, Earth, and our galaxy. Joseph Harris was taking part in that international project, coming to Trefeca to provide calculations from yet another vantage point to add to the world-wide data. To participate in that experiment too he needed to establish a meridian line. He also could, and did, calculate thereby how far West of the Greenwich Meridian Trefeca lies: he put Trefeca on the map.

There is no trace at Coleg Trefeca nowadays of the Meridian line, and little knowledge of it.

As the Talgarth plaque noted Joseph's unassuming manner and tendency to omit his name from his writings, I decided, when I undertook to discover all I could about Joseph, to start by improving my ability to recognise Joseph's handwriting by transcribing an example of it. By chance I found this at Coleg Trefeca: photocopies of the seven sheets of Joseph's handwritten covering letter of 25th November 1761 to Lord Macclesfield and *Account* of the Transit pasted on a large board. It may have been on its way to the skip, but I was allowed to bring it home and photograph the pages. When I had finished the transcription there remained six or so words I

couldn't make out, so I looked for the published copy to check against. Of course I went first to the Royal Society, to which it was originally destined; to my astonishment they did not know of it. Llyfrgell Genedlaethol Cymru/The National Library of Wales held the manuscript but no printed version. Further enquiries on the Internet produced nothing. At that point I contacted Dr. Peter Duffett-Smith, Reader in Radio-Astronomy at Cambridge University, who with great generosity has been my mentor ever since, and provided guidance over every query.

I realised too that this was material that should be made public, even if 250 years late.

I do not know why Joseph's *Account* was not published. After the letter of 25th November 1761 and enclosure, there is complete silence. The Earl of Macclesfield was a good friend of Joseph's and would have wanted to help him; was he already ill (he died less than three years later, as did Joseph, in 1764)? Did he overlook it? Did Mr. Alchorne, the chosen carrier, forget it? I would love to know!

What I have done is to collect every reference I can find relating to Joseph's *Account*. Howell Harris, Joseph's famous youngest brother, was a voluminous letter-writer and diarist, and determined guardian of every relevant piece of paper; this material has been kept safe by those dedicated to keeping alive Howell's achievements, though in various and confusing collections. In 2003 Boyd Stanley Schlenker and Erin Mant White published a *Calendar of the Trevecka Letters*, collecting together in digest form and in date order much of this correspondence. I have taken from the *Calendar* every reference to Joseph and his family that I can find and, as with the *Account*, have transcribed afresh every letter from the original manuscripts in Llyfrgell Genedlaethol Cymru/The National Library of Wales whom I thank for their kind permission. Howell himself was a lifelong and assiduous diarist, and in the Rev. Tom Beynon's *Howell Harris Soldier and Statesman 1714–1773* (1958) I found, already transcribed, every diary entry relating to the period. I have interleaved the three sets of information in date order creating, I hope, a detailed picture of the preparations, background, illnesses and family affections that swirled around, and sometimes beset, this fascinating *Account*; forgotten no longer.

Texts

1760 December 13th Howell Harris diary:

"Brecon. Stayed at the Lion last night with my wife.¹ After breakfast with her to Capt. Meredith to see my niece² and Lady Williams. Again to the Lion with her, and settled with her to go and see Mrs. Lloyd Bullock, Mrs. Gwynne, and my niece again. . . ."

1760 December 25th Howell Harris diary:

"Trevecka Xmas Day. Discoursed long. Now my niece of London is here, and went with us to church. She came here last night.³ Shewed her she is a sinner which she could not bear."

1761 February 10th Howell Harris diary:

“Brecon. Gave Hervey’s *Meditations*⁴ to my niece.”

1761 April 25th Letter from Joseph Harris (London) to Howell Harris (Trefeca):

London 25th April 1761

Dear Brother,

This day I sent by the Hereford Carrier 3 boxes each directed to Mr. Evan Roberts at Trevecka, one is a rough case with the lid Screwed down, the other two have matts wrapped round them. You’ll be so kind as to send for them from the Hay, if the carrier comes no further, and pay the carriage; and I shall repay all costs as soon as I come down. The boxes contain some Mathematical Instruments, which will employ me with you several days. I wish the two that are matted especially may be handled and carried as gently as may be. I hope Mr. Roberts hath been able to procure me a horse. I shall want some quiet safe thing to carry me at least whilst I am in the Countrey. At present I cannot walk 40 yards around, but I hope the Journey will help me. We are in hopes to be in Brecknock about Wednesday or Thursday next. My wife⁵ joins in our Love to you, Sister and cousin⁶ with

Dear Brother

Yours most affectionately.

Joseph Harris.

My Service to Mr. Roberts

1761 April 28th Howell Harris diary:

“Brecon . . . Tonight my brother came from London.”

1761 April 29th Howell Harris diary:

“Brecon. With Brother Joseph, more than happy.”

1761 May 6th and 7th Howell Harris diary:

“Trevecka. To Brecon for my brother Joseph. Came home with him against 3. Discoursed.”

1761 May 8th and 9th Howell Harris diary:

“Trevecka. Discoursed. My sister[-in-law, Anne⁷], niece [Anna Maria], and brother [Joseph] hear every opportunity with attention.”

1761 May 10th Howell Harris diary:

“Trevecka . . . Sacrament (my brother being with me at the table) . . . At home after dining with brother Joseph. I discoursed, Welsh and English,⁸ with the women and men apart, with such as I don’t meet separate. I keep a Love Feast to 10. My brother and his wife, etc., looking at me and hearing me exhorting⁹ and approving . . .”

1761 May 13th Howell Harris diary:

“Brecon. Spoke to the Colonel. Went with my brother to the Brecon Society to near 5, then home and discoursed.”

1761 May 17th (Sunday) Howell Harris diary:

“Brecon. To church. Brother heard and approved much. I discoursed. This evening brother went to Trevecka.”

1761 May 18th Howell Harris diary:

“Brecon. In the evening I discoursed on my dear topic – our dear Redeemer’s glory, and believing in Him and being honest to Him. This is certainly the sum of my preaching. About 9 went home, it being an eclipse of the moon.¹⁰ Sat up with my brother Joseph to near 1 viewing the moon.”

1761 May 24th (Sunday) Howell Harris diary:

“Domi [Trevecka] . . . Discoursed at 2 (my brother stayed till now and in the evening went to Brecon, and I sent him part of the way).

1761 May 26th Howell Harris diary:

“After 12 I parted with dear Trevecka to Brecknock by 2. Settling my affairs and boxes and parting with brother Joseph to 7, then discoursed to a few and sat up to 9 with my dear Brethren.”

1761 May 27th Howell Harris diary:

“Brecon. Set out about 6 to Abergavenny against 1, being hooted on the way. Parting with brother Joseph.”

1761 June 6th Joseph Harris’s ‘Account of the late Transit of Venus over the Sun, as it was observed at Trefeca in Brecknockshire’ and the establishment of a meridian line.

Joseph’s report was not ready for transmission to the Royal Society until 25th November 1761, as illness and burden of work at the Royal Mint prevented him from completing the important calculations of the parallaxes. So it is at that date (*below*) that I have placed it.

1761 June 26th Letter from Joseph Harris (Trevecka) to Howell Harris (Bideford):

Dear Brother,

Trevecka 26th June 1761

It gave me great pleasure to hear of Your health and safe arrival at Biddiford, which I hope will be your last station till you return home. I have missed you here so much, where I have spent in the whole a good deal of time, but was all the while as the weather would permit. I have set your dial, and drawn a Meridian in the room over the oven to great exactitude, and your people make nothing of regulating the clocks to a very few Seconds, so that all the Countrey round may regulate their clocks and dyals by Yours. I have also near finished my own observations and am preparing to pack up my Instruments, so I expect this to be my last night here, excepting perhaps for a few hours before our departure for London. The time of which is not yet fixed, but I imagine it will be in about three weeks. I expect my Wife and daughter to be here tomorrow to take their leave of this neighbourhood. I hope you continue to enjoy your health; thank God I am greatly recovered since I saw you, tho’ a few days ago I was lame with the gout and my feet are still too tender for walking much. My Wife is better than she hath been for a long since.

It gives me great pleasure to inform you that all here are well, and everything is carried on with the usual regularity. I hope your meeting with Mr. Wynne¹¹ will prove a means of settling your differences. I despair of seeing You, but I hope I shall hear from You

before I go. I am much obliged to my Sister¹² and all here for their kindness and Civilities, with a due sense of which I conclude

Dear Brother

Yours most affectionately

Joseph Harris

I beg my Compliments to Sir

Edwards Williams and to Capt. Powell.

My wife and I were at Castlemaddock last Tuesday,

But I was not able to get my shoes on that day at all well; Wife had not heard from him when I left Brecknock as I was to be, which made the poor Woman very uneasy.

1761 July 3rd Letter from Anne [Williams] Harris, wife of Howell, to her husband in Bideford:

July 3, 1761

Dear Mr. Harris,

O I feel it is a great thing to keep with God when the spirit is confust and puselt put shur I can and do belive he cums after me and cals to me and as if he should say O Nancy whear art thou and has in some meshur mad me believe that he has Dyed for me and is willing to give me his spirit. If this bruks my stonny heart and maks me fall at his feet with tears of love fo that der man & shuer he is becom my salvacyon. Your Brother and Sister is hear put Nanny¹³ is not verry well in Brecon. Shee sends her kind love to you put my brother¹⁴ writs to you. We had Mr. Wintear¹⁵ & his wife¹⁶ to brexvast and dinner with us. My Sister¹⁷ lys very bad in the Gout¹⁸ and tis not known when thay will go from hear. O pray for me that I may be I may always be calt humbul then. Hanna¹⁹ I know loves me and I am shuer I love hear with the love that Jonathan had to David. The love gives me sumthing to continue to pray for you and how glad should I be if god will let me see your Dear face wonst mor shuer I am won with you know and forever in him who has furst brot us togarer.

Anne Harris

1761 Letter from Hannah Bowen, (Trefecka housekeeper), to Howell Harris (Bideford):

My dear father,

July 7, 1761

How is it that wee don't hear from you these last two posts. Sure I expected with great eagerness to hear from you today but I have heard nothing. My spirit is like one that is tyer'd and redy to faint and have not one to tell how it is with me or to bear any of the Burthen – I expected to hear one word from you but in vain did I expect from that quarter. O my dr. father I hope you can't help going to God for us if you can't have time to write. The Enemy pushes hard and the flesh Stands always at the door ready to let him in – but for some amazing Grace that is still in His Heart that we are not swallowed up – Cares from within and without are upon me (and my spirit very carnal). James²⁰ is not att home nor Ev. Mo.²¹ is not come home, and am ready to say was it some curse that came upon us that we have your Bror., Sister and Nice hear and are oblidge to tend them – I feel that it is my Comfort that He has promised that He will be with me in the fire and the water and that all shall work for Good. My spirit is in distress and mine Eyes full of tears that I can scarce forbear whilst I am writing these few lines my dr.

fathr. I hope you will bear with me, and pittie me for I think is some care and consern for God's name and His Glory how far the Enemy may strike in and seek to weaken me. God knows that I wood have wrote more particules but have no time the post is just going – I believe that John Rob. and Sarah J. are still in the same snare. I had something particular to speak to him today, I never was struck so in my Life when I saw them alone. Dr. dr. father, yours in all the Battle, HB.

For

Captain Harris in the Breconshire Militia²² in Biddiford

Devonshire

there

Mr. Ho Gwynne

post

1761 November 19th Letter from Joseph Harris, Place House, Lewisham to Howell Harris [Torrington, Devon]:

Place House 19th November²³ 1761

Mr dear Brother,

I am sorry to see that You are likely to Winter at So great a distance from home; but we should be Satisfied with our lot and You have trusty people to take care of Your affairs in Your absence. Mr. Roberts was so kind as to call upon us here and I sent with him Eusebius for You.

It was not in my power to serve Mr. Morgan in relation to the living of Lanelue,²⁴ and I have been informed that the Living had been promised before I heard any thing about it. I always considered the office of a Parish Priest to be an office of the greatest importance to all his neighbours; so much there is depending upon his abilities, character and behaviour, that however Slightly others may think of the matter I should be loth to intermediate in Church preferments unless I was well acquainted with and had a good Opinion of the Candidate. I am sorry to see So many poor Parsons, but the plea of poverty is not alone a sufficient recommendation for the cure of souls.

I have now finished all my calculations relating to my observations at Trefecka, and some of them were very laborious, however I have the satisfaction of having settled a point in the Map, I think, very exactly, and Trefecka may serve as a standard from whence to reckon the situations of the neighbouring places. I think to communicate the results of my observations to the Royal Society, as soon as we get up to Town which I think will be in less than a fortnight.

I was surprised to hear than Trefecka Ycha was to be sold, but I am too old to think of Purchases, and having a daughter to dispose Money would be more acceptable than Land. And, so long as it shall please God to continue my health, I think I may be more usefull hereabouts than I would be in my native country.

We are, and of late, thank God, have been here pretty well. My wife and daughter join with me in our respective Complements to you. I desire mine also to Your good Collonel, and to such of your brother officers as I am acquainted with.

I am

Dear Brother

Yours most affectionately,
Joseph Harris

1761 November 25th Letter from Joseph Harris to Lord Macclesfield:²⁵

My Lord,

If the annexed account meets with Your Lordship's approbation, I should be glad to have it laid before the Royal Society. I should have communicated it much sooner, but that I waited till I could find leisure to compute the Parallaxes, without doing which my observations could have been but of little use.

I have the honour to be

My Lord

Tower of London
25th November 1761

Your Lordship's
most obedient
humble Servant
Joseph Harris

To the Earl of Macclesfield

A copy of this paper I left then with Mr. Alchorn²⁶ to present next day to my Lord Macclesfield.

An account of the late Transit of Venus over the Sun, as it was observed at Trevecka in Brecknockshire. By Joseph Harris.

The weather at Trevecka proving cloudy from the time I got there till the 5th of June, I could not till then get a Meridian line: This was drawn on the floor of a darkened room, by taking the Sun's image projected through a small round hole through a metallized plate fixed in the roof. All the necessary cautions were taken in the finding of this line: A point, on a firm block, exactly under the hole above mentioned, was found by a plummet having a conical end; and from this point as a center was described several concentric circles upon a smooth plank, before set horizontal and also level with the said center; and from the near coincidence of a line drawn from thence, with the several bisections made from the several correspondent points in the concentric circles, I had reason to conclude that we got our meridian as exactly as this method and the size of the room would admit of. I think that we could not err in the position of our line above the value of two or three seconds of time, and by taking half the breadth of the Sun's image a little before it came to the meridian line, and laying it to one side of that line, the time when the Sun's image touched the mark left there, could be distinguished to about one second; so that the whole error in taking the Sun's transit over the meridian could not, I think, exceed about four seconds of time.

The two following days we had the Sun clear at noon, which gave us the rates of going of the clock and of my Stop Watch, the equaling of that time being allowed for. In the following account of the times of the contacts, the error in the meridian line amounting to about 4 seconds, arising from the increase of the Sun's declination during the interval of the time taken in finding it, is allowed for; and also the error in the going of the watch from the time of the internal contact of Venus with the Sun's limb, till noon, supposing it went at the same rate as it did the next 24 hours, in which time it gained 53 seconds.

I thought this detail necessary, that others might thereby be enabled to form the better judgement as to the degree of exactness, to which the times hereafter mentioned may be relied upon. The principal doubt with myself is, about my Watch keeping time proportionally from the first contact till noon, to what it did during the next 24 hours.

But as the Watch was a good one, and the interval it had to err in was but less than four hours there is no great room to fear that any great error could arise from thence. I have regretted since that I did not take the Sun's altitude immediately after the transit of ♀²⁷ was over, which would have given me the time to a great exactness, as I was provided with a very good Instrument for that purpose. But being then in a weak state of health, without a proper assistant, and not foreseeing that that use might be made of my observations which I afterwards thought might be, I omitted the taking of that little additional trouble, an omission which nothing but the causes above assigned could have excused.

June 6th 1761. I saw the Sun rise, and it continued clear the whole morning till past noon. But not being then able to bear much fatigue, I confined my observations chiefly to the times of the two contacts of ♀ with the Sun's limb.

At Trevecka the internal contact of ♀ with the Sun's limb happened at

	h m s
	8: 5: 13 a.m.
The external contact or final egress at	8: 23: 28
	18: 15
Difference	

The Telescope I used was a²⁸ foot Reflector; but in the present case, the size of the telescope is scarce worth mentioning; for with that small one, the time of the internal contact or the breaking of the fine lucid thread of light was so instantaneous, that I was sure of it to much less than a Second. At that instant I set my watch which I held in my hand a'going, it being before stopped with the minute and second hands set to the beginning of the divisions; and thus I found the length of the interval of time from noon. But the time of the external contact I could not ascertain to the same exactness; herein I was doubtful to three or four seconds; and I suspect that with the best of Telescopes, this observation could not be ascertained to any great precision; and without the utmost attention a very considerable error might be easily committed: Nor is this to be wondered at, when it is considered that in the present case any given error in the observation as to Space, will be magnified above two hundred times in the conclusions.

Notwithstanding the disagreements between many of our home observations, which I think arose merely from the want of having the times better adjusted, I see no room to question the exactness of the observers at Greenwich, as it was next to impossible for them to err in their time; the only error, I think, that could be committed any where. For, as hath been before observed, the internal contact appeared so instantaneously, even through a small Telescope, that I think the greatest novice could hardly err one second in the taking of that observation; but I should not wonder if persons not accustomed to Astronomical observations, should differ much as to the length of time between the two contacts.

From the observations of the internal contact, made at the Royal Observatory at Greenwich, and at Trevecka I think the difference of longitude between these two places may be safely obtained within the limits above mentioned. For this purpose, I computed the effects of the Parallaxes at each place; supposing the horizontal parallaxes of the Sun and Venus, the position of her orbit, and the Sun's diameter, were at the time, as they are



The telescope on which it is said Joseph Harris carried out the observations.



The detachable eyepiece of the Trefeca telescope.

The Trefeca Meridian

61

to be collected from Dr. Halley's Tables; and should these tables be found defective, the error thence arising may be easily corrected hereafter.

By my calculations both the contacts happened sooner at Trevecka than at Greenwich, viz.

	seconds
The internal	5.46
External	1.99
	<hr/>

Duration between the two contacts longer at Trevecka than at Greenwich 3.47

Hence, the observers at the two places, agree as to the time of the second contact within about 2½ seconds.

	h m s
Internal contact at Greenwich	8 19 0
Trevecka	8 5 13
	<hr/>
	13 47
Neglecting the fraction, deduct	5
	<hr/>
	13 42

Longitude of Trevecka from the Royal Observatory at Greenwich

	m s
	13 42 = 3° 25' 30" Wly
Latitude of Trevecka	51 58 30

The latitude was deduced from the meridional altitude of the Pole Star, which in these high latitudes I take to be a very good method, the long stay of that Star upon the wire in the Telescope, giving the observer a sufficient time to verify his observation. The Instrument I used I could depend upon to rather less than the 1/3 of a minute; and two observations made at different times coincide exactly.

I cannot conclude this paper without giving my opinion, that if a competent number of observations have been made by skilful persons at proper places, the great end proposed by our late great Astronomer Dr. Halley, may be obtained perhaps to the degree of exactness mentioned by him, notwithstanding the position of the track of ☿ over the Sun, proved not so advantageously as he then imagined.

1762 July 30th Letter from Charles Powell (Castlemadock) to Howell Harris (Barnstaple):

Sir, Castlemadock July 30 1762

As I had nothing worthwhile communicating, you will be so good as to excuse me for not writing to you sooner.

By a card I had yesterday from the Baronet I scarce find him in a disposition to join you soon, which gives me some uneasiness, for if he was with the Corps, he might easily dispense with your absence as well as mine for a few weeks. Especially as we are joined by another Corps of the next County and both under the Command of Brigadr. Genl. Morgan, who will certainly give you leave if you only apply for it. I am obliged to stay over our Great Sessions as the Justices of the Qr. Sessions refused to try the Girls for

stealing the Cloth off the Bleachyard which I now find is Felony without Benefit of Clergy, and therefore not cognisable before the Justices. Our Sessions begin the 20th and end on the 27th instant. My leave from Mr. Morgan is for 2 months from the 9th July but if I can finish my Affairs so as to join you sooner, I will. I have no less than 5 Farms to let; and Times are here so bad, that I have not rented one of them out.

Mr. Gregory Parry our Rector was yesterday at Llanfechan²⁹ to receive his Tythe Money etc. where I gave him the Meeting; he informed me that Mr. Harris and your Family at Trefecka are well. He has been twice there to set his watch by the Meridian.

With my compliments to Mr. Hay, Mr. Wms. and Mr. J. Lawrence, and to yr. Officers at Falmouth when you see them. I am, Sir, Your most obedt. Servant,

Cha. Powell

As you are got into the
Saturday Nights' Club. Beware! Your virtue and your
Religion, its Safeguard, will be put to the Test.

JENNIFER STANESBY MOODY

Notes

¹ Anne, wife of Howell, formerly Anne Williams. Since both Joseph's wife and Howell's wife have the name Anne, I have placed their maiden names in square brackets to reduce confusion.

² Anna Maria, born probably around 1744, only surviving child (out of no less than five) of Joseph and Anne [Jones] Harris. She was known familiarly as Nanny or Na. She may have been staying with Lady Williams, wife of Sir Edward Williams, of Llangoed Castle, who seem to have been good friends to Joseph and his family.

³ Despite the lack of any earlier correspondence on the subject, it is clear that Joseph's project to observe the transit of Venus over the Sun had been in preparation well before this date. Anna Maria seems to have come from London to Brecon without her parents before 13th December, and was not joined by them until 28th April 1761. This visit to Trefeca was probably a passing one for Christmas.

⁴ James Hervey's *Meditations Among the Tombs: tending to reform the vices of the age and to promote evangelical holiness*, published in 1745 influenced, among others, William Blake and Horace Walpole.

⁵ Anne [Jones] Harris.

⁶ 'Sister' is Anne [Williams] Harris, wife to Howell, and 'cousin' Elizabeth, also known as Betty, their daughter.

⁷ Anne, elder daughter of Thomas Jones II of Tredustan, was probably brought up in this writer's present home, Tredustan Court. She definitely owned it after her father's death in 1743, and it was let to Walter Prosser. The year of Anne Jones's birth or baptism is so far unknown but probably close to 1706; she was courted by Joseph Harris most faithfully for no less than 11 years. They were married on 31st October 1736 at the Wren church of St. Benet, Paul's Wharf, London (later known as the Welsh church), six months after Joseph took up residence and employment in the Tower of London at the Royal Mint, where he was to remain, dying in office as the King's Assay Master in 1764.

⁸ Everyone in the Harris family spoke Welsh and English. Joseph and Howell could read Greek and Latin too. Many treatises up to that time were written in Latin, so it was necessary knowledge for any aspiring to scholarship, and Joseph urged Howell to study it. Howell wrote of how he hated learning it, though he used the occasional word of Latin for the rest of his life e.g. *domi*, *tandem* and *via*, and as a young man wrote a diary in a mixture of Welsh, English and Latin.

⁹ Early on Howell was warned that he was by law not permitted to preach and would, if he continued, be prevented from taking holy orders in the Church of England. So the word 'exhort' was adopted instead.

¹⁰ The total phase of the eclipse took place from 21.24 to 22.59, last contact 01.16 May 19. I am most grateful to Dr. Peter Duffett-Smith, Reader in Experimental Radio Physics at Cambridge University and Fellow of the Royal Astronomical Society for this information.

¹¹ Watkin Wynne was the brother of Madam Sidney Griffith; she impressed Howell deeply as an inspired exhorter, and their closeness from 1748 onwards caused a serious scandal from which Howell's reputation struggled to recover. On her death in 1752 law suits were started by her brother, Watkin Wynne, and her son, John Griffith, on one side and Howell Harris on the other over monies paid, lent, owed and given. Watkin Wynne commanded a militia like Howell's, and they were sent off to defend nearby areas in the West Country. Joseph's hope that meeting Madam Griffith's brother face to face would give rise to a settlement was sadly optimistic, and the law suits rattled on unabated.

¹² Anne [Williams] Harris, wife of Howell, whose own letter to her husband comes next.

¹³ Nanny is Anna Maria, daughter of Joseph and Anne.

¹⁴ Joseph Harris, her brother-in-law.

¹⁵ Daniel Wynter, husband of Mary Jones, younger sister of Anne [Jones] Harris. The sisters were joint heiresses of Thomas Jones II of Tredustan.

¹⁶ Mary [Jones] Wynter, born about 1710 (see note above).

¹⁷ Anne [Jones] Harris, Joseph's wife.

¹⁸ Recurrence of gout must be the reason that Joseph's family are back at Trefeca being looked after by the staff; cf Joseph's letter of 26th June saying his wife and daughter had left and would return only for a few hours to say goodbye; and Hannah Bowen's of 7th July.

¹⁹ Hannah Bowen, housekeeper at the Trefeca community, whose letter comes next.

²⁰ James Pritchard.

²¹ Evan Moses.

²² Howell, in September 1759, acceded to the urging of Joseph and many others to join the Breconshire Militia. He agreed to do this on condition that he bring men from his Trefeca religious community and remain in command of them. This he did.

²³ The date of this letter has been altered and is hard to read, raising doubts. It may be that it was written on the date to which I have ascribed it, but posting delayed and the date overwritten; it is clear to me from the letter's contents and the Place House address that it was written before the letter to Lord Macclesfield clearly dated 25th November. Schlenther and White have it in their *Calendar of the Trevecka Letters*, wrongly I think, at 29th November.

²⁴ Llanelieu.

²⁵ Lord Macclesfield, an eminent astronomer, was President of the Royal Society.

²⁶ When Joseph Harris was appointed King's Assay Master at the Royal Mint in 1749 he was asked to ensure that future appointments be anticipated and appropriate training given. This he did with typical thoroughness, and at Joseph Harris's own death in 1764 the Master's Assay Master, Joseph Lucas, was able to move up seamlessly to become King's Assay Master in Joseph Harris's stead. Joseph Harris had also early appointed a talented young man, Stanesby Alchorne, as his own assistant. When Joseph Harris died and Joseph Lucas took his place, Stanesby Alchorne moved up into Lucas's now vacant position as Master's Assay Master and, when Lucas in his turn died, again followed in his footsteps to become King's Assay Master. Alchorne was the grandson of Thomas Stanesby senior and nephew to Thomas Stanesby junior, a well-known father-and-son partnership of wind-instrument makers of that period. I didn't know of the existence of Alchorne until I transcribed this letter, and realised only in December 2009 that his Christian name was Stanesby and that he is a relative of mine: Thomas Stanesby senior's father was my own great grandfather many times removed. I hope very sincerely that it was not Alchorne's fault that the *Account* was never presented to the Royal Society; if it was, I am delighted that it falls to me to play however tiny a part in redressing

that omission. Stanesby Alchorne was also an apothecary and a botanist; in 1771, at his own expense, he sent forty tons of Tower of London stone from the demolition of antiquated buildings in the Royal Mint to establish a rockery in the Chelsea Physic Garden.

²⁷ Symbol for the planet Venus.

²⁸ Joseph Harris omitted the figure 'five'. At Coleg Trefeca there is in a wall-mounted display case a telescope said to be the one on which Joseph made his observations. On 18th December 2009, with the kind permission of the Coleg authorities, the telescope was examined and found to be a five foot reflector. It is a 6'1" tubular case, 5.25" in diameter, made of thin, black-stained, curved planking bound with narrow brass rings, containing a Newtonian reflector. The focal length is 5'. The eye-piece is mounted on a slide on the outside which can be tightened by means of a screw; the lens of the eye-piece has sustained a chipping injury. The speculum, or mirror, is parabolic, and is probably two-thirds copper and one-third tin with the addition of a little arsenic. The flat, or small mirror opposite the eye-piece, which deflects the reflected rays into the side-mounted eye-piece, is missing. Joseph Harris does not explain in the Account how he projected the image of the Sun, as viewing it through the eye-piece would have blinded him.

²⁹ Llanfechan: either Llanfihangel Fechan, now usually known as Capel Isaf/Lower Chapel, in the Honddu Valley near Castlemadoc, or possibly Llanafanfechan near Builth, often known as Llanfechan.

AN OUTLINE HISTORY OF PENYRHEOL BAPTIST CHAPEL IN THE FORMER PARISH OF GLASBURY

Some 4km almost due south of the village of Llanigon (Llaneigon) at map reference SO 208358 is the Baptist Chapel known as Penyrheol. The name is descriptive of its remote, elevated location at the end of a country lane and next to a farmhouse of the same name. [See map and photograph] It never had a biblical name and, as with so many other early non-conformist places of worship, eg Maesyberllan, Maesyronnen, et al., the siting and naming of this chapel were connected with a gift of land.

There has been a Baptist presence in this locality, intermittently, since 1650. At this time, a group of religious dissenters meeting in the adjoining parish of Llanigon, probably at Penyrwylrod, the home of William Watkins,¹ were visited by the Calvinistic Baptist evangelist John Miles, and several of them accepted believer's baptism by immersion.² These broke away and formed the so-called *Church at Hay*. A few of them, key figures and ministers in the early movement, can be named: *Walter Prosser of Hay, Thomas Watkins – The Sheephouse* (brother of William), *Charles Garson, Thomas Parry – Y Wenallt, Llanigon*.³ Whether they had a meeting place in the

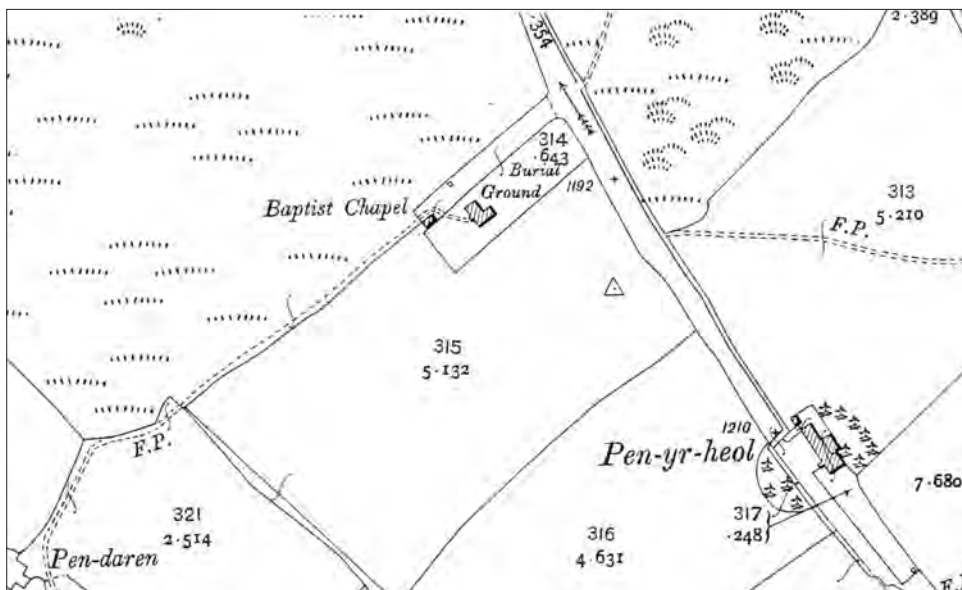


Figure 1 Part copy of Brecknockshire Sheet XXIII.9, 25 inches to 1 mile, c.1890 showing Penyrheol Baptist Chapel and Penyrheol Farm as part of Tregoyd and Velindre Hamlet, Glasbury Parish.



Figure 2 Penyrheol Chapel viewed from the north showing its elevated position in the foothills of the Breconshire Black Mountains.

Photo by Godfrey Harris

town of Hay is doubtful; the Sheephouse in Hay Rural Parish is more likely. The above mentioned became key figures and ministers in the early movement.⁴ With the end of Commonwealth, and persecution during the Restoration, this group was dispersed. Some became a part of the Olchon Church, just over the border in Herefordshire,⁵ while others later joined adherents meeting in Trosgoed (Trawsgoed), Talachddu.⁶ This group would eventually become the Maesyberllan Church whose ministers would play an important part in the expansion of the Baptist cause in the northern part of the county, including the Church at Penyrheol. Another link with the Olchon Church occurs later in the 18th century at Maesdorglwyd, north of Penyrheol, the home of William Maddy, (and, discounting distant Capel-y-ffin on its south-eastern border, the last meeting place of Baptists in the parish of Llanigon).⁷ In 1753, when the Baptist Association met there, Maesdorglwyd is recorded as *belonging to Olchon*.⁸ The Maddy family would also feature in the founding of the Church at Penyrheol.

In 1758 **John Thomas** (1719–86) moved from the Church at Aberduar, Carms., where he had been ordained in 1743, to be the minister of Maesyberllan.⁹ In 1768 **William Williams** (1714–86) who had been a Methodist preacher for twenty years was ordained by Thomas as co-pastor. About 1776 John Thomas

married William Maddy's widow Elizabeth and they occupied the farm Penyrheol which she had inherited.¹⁰ There were several Baptists living nearby, and Thomas, in addition to his Maesyberllan duties, preached there occasionally, assisted by Williams. Soon the house proved too small for the growing congregation so he and his wife agreed to give a part of their land as a site for a Meeting House and graveyard. The building was completed in 1784.¹¹ Two years after, in November 1786, John Thomas died on the 5th, fast followed by Elizabeth on the 10th and his colleague Williams on the 12th. John and Elizabeth Thomas were probably the first to be buried in Penyrheol graveyard.¹²

For the building, no name- or date-stone survive but a stone plaque on the outside west wall reads:

*The Memoir of Two Hundred and Forty Pounds
Of the Pious Donation of Thomas Williams of
The Island Gent in the parish of Llanigon
And County of Brecon to and for the use and
Benefit of this Pen-yr-heol Church for ever—*

Unfortunately, the last part is damaged but it must date from about 1788 because Thomas Williams of the Island, a farm east across the valley from Penyrheol,



Figure 3 Penyrheol Chapel c.2001. Front and side elevations viewed from the north-west. The plaque between the two windows commemorates the gift of money from Thomas Williams of The Island, c.1788.

died 1st September 1788, aged 74. His wife Martha died aged 80 on 26th April 1822 and both are buried at Penyrheol.¹³ It seems from later evidence that this was indeed to be a lasting legacy from a Church member.

The next minister was **David Evans** (1744–1821). Ordained at Newcastle Emlyn in 1778, he served Maesyberllan and Penyrheol from 1787 until 1817. He was assisted by his two sons, whom he himself ordained: **John** (d.1851) later to become minister of Watergate, Brecon, and **David D** (1787–1878).¹⁴ These three continued the ‘outreach’ work of Maesyberllan, and were involved in establishing some five Baptist Churches in the north of the county.

The first three decades of the cause at Penyrheol were as a branch of Maesyberllan, but Penyrheol was recognised in 1819, at a Baptist Association meeting held in Newtown, as an independent Church and a member of the Association.¹⁵ After a short vacancy, **William Richards** (1789–1859), a native of Morryston, Glam. and trained at the Abergavenny Academy, was ordained and inducted at Penyrheol in 1822. Now began the first of its three sole pastorates. Richards served for thirty-seven years until his death in June 1859.¹⁶ He and his wife Hannah lived in Blaen-y-cwm, a short distance from the chapel.¹⁷ She outlived him until 6th March the following year and is buried at Penyrheol but there is no record of his burial there.¹⁸ This, the longest pastorate, was fruitful. In 1833 a student John Jones was sponsored at Abergavenny Academy by Penyrheol but his untimely death prevented his qualifying.¹⁹ The Religious Census of 1851 recorded an evening attendance of 173 in the chapel, and by 1855 the membership had risen to 65 with 30 scholars.²⁰ Although baptismal numbers were not recorded, there must have been many to warrant these figures. Tradition has it that baptisms were conducted in the Dipping Pool close-by at SO216357.²¹ During this time, Trustees, probably the first, were appointed. The original Deed of 3rd April 1854 is not extant but the names occur in a subsequent Deed, 13th May 1907 [Appendix I] under the heading ‘Old and continuing’. There are twelve in addition to William Richards: eight farmers, three tradesmen and one labourer. All but one come from the parishes of Llanigon and Glasbury. Richards was much in demand as a preacher in Welsh and English at Association meetings, ordinations and chapel opening ceremonies, with no less than nine occasions recorded in Baptist periodicals.²² Records exist of two Quarterly Association Meetings being held at Penyrheol during his ministry.²³ During this flourishing time, it is likely, on the evidence of the numbers quoted above and continuous growth (see below), that a decision was taken and plans made to improve the chapel. Sadly, Richards did not live to see their completion.

On the 2nd and 3rd October 1860 the re-opening ceremony of Penyrheol Chapel took place.²⁴ The work included raising the roof a few feet, installing a gallery and a new pulpit. The total cost of £100 (about £7000 at today’s prices) was partially met with donations of £65. As usual, preaching services formed a large part of the ceremonies and five ministers took part. By this time, **W Evans** was serving as

An Outline History of Penyrheol Baptist Chapel in the former parish of Glasbury 69

minister but his stay was only two years from 1860–1.²⁵ Another short pastorate was with **R Lloyd** from 1861–3²⁶ who came from Zion, Gladestry and was present and preached at the re-opening ceremony.

As already mentioned, the early Baptist Meeting houses were, more often than not, in rural settings but from about 1800 the pattern changed. The 19th century witnessed an unprecedented growth in membership and chapel building, most of which occurred in urban situations. One such development was in the village of Glasbury which started in 1862 and resulted in the building of Treble Hill Baptist Chapel in 1866–7.²⁷ Henceforth, Penyrheol, whilst remaining independent, would share a minister with Treble Hill. The first was **Llewellyn Jones** (1838–87), who trained at Pontypool Baptist College, serving from 1864–9²⁸ and living at Cwmgwilym,²⁹ a short distance from Penyrheol, before he moved to Mizpah, Llanfrynach for four years. During his ministry, the membership of Penyrheol reached 90, the highest recorded.³⁰ One advantage of the link with Glasbury was that baptisms could now take place in a purpose-built baptistry, firstly on land at the rear of Treble Hill Chapel purchased in 1871, and later inside the chapel.³¹

The next minister, **David Howells** (1841–90) was one of the longest serving joint ministers – twenty years until his death in 1890. He was born in Llanelli, Carms., trained at Pontypool College, had a short ministry in Liverpool³² then moved to Glasbury in 1870 where he lived first at Bridge End.³³



Figure 4 Penyrheol Chapel c.2001. Rear and side elevations from the east showing the former vestry, now a kitchen.

Two other important consequences of the growth of the denomination at this time were the formation of the Breconshire Baptist Association in 1865 and the Baptist Union of Wales in 1866.³⁴ The 1872 Annual Meeting of the former was held at Penyrheol³⁵ and must have placed a great responsibility on Howells and his members in providing food and accommodation for delegates over the two days. Although Penyrheol was the host, the chapel at Treble Hill with its seating for 350 must have been used. Numbers attending are not known but thirteen ministers shared the preaching at the public meetings which were, in those times, always well attended. Later, Howells is recorded as preaching at Association meetings at Lower Chapel in 1875 and Llangamarch in 1884.³⁶ His pastorate saw changes in the fortunes of Penyrheol, with numbers down to 72 members, 34 scholars and only 3 baptisms whereas Treble Hill reached its peak with 83 members, 35 scholars and 16 baptisms recorded.³⁷

T G James was present briefly during 1891–2. After another short pastorate at Mizpah, Llanfrynach he moved to Bethesda, Rogerstone, his last ministerial post until 1910 when he became Director of Education for Monmouthshire.³⁸ He was succeeded by **John Lloyd Williams**, trained at Pontypool Baptist College. Between 1892 and 1898 he served Penyrheol, then in Treherbert and subsequently in Merthyr where he retired in 1936.³⁹ During his stay Penyrheol experienced another drop in membership to 54.⁴⁰ In the latter part of the 19th century similar decreases occurred in Breconshire Churches due to a movement of population from rural areas to the industrial south. Ministers also were finding more rewarding situations in the expanding Churches of the mining valleys, as is apparent in Williams' case, and in the biographies of several of Penyrheol's ministers.

In 1901 the fall in membership was reversed. During the brief ministry of **G H Bebb** (1899 B 1902) there were 80 members, 35 scholars and 5 baptisms.⁴¹ From this time, a bound Contributions book⁴² dated May 1902 to May 1939 has survived. Written over the years by several Treasurers, it records meticulously quarterly payments made by individuals and families. It shows the loyalty and generosity of the members, and serves as a register of names. In 1904 Wales experienced its greatest and last Religious Revival but this had little effect, in terms of membership, in most Breconshire Churches including Penyrheol. Its membership remained constant at about 70 for the first quarter of the century.⁴³ Figures in a National Survey 1910 confirm this position: Penyrheol has 130 sittings, 6 deacons, 71 communicants and 30 regular attenders.⁴⁴

Edward Davies (1880–1917) the son of Rev. David Davies of Maesyrhelem, Llanbister came in 1906, lived in the village of Felindre, and served until the First World War when he joined the YMCA. He was killed while evacuating wounded on 23rd October 1917.⁴⁵ He has memorials inside both Penyrheol and Treble Hill chapels, and Penyrheol has another memorial to Wilfred Price, Pantycelyn who was killed 12th November 1917 aged 19. Both are buried in France. Early in Davies'



Figure 5 Penyrheol Chapel interior, c.2001. The two memorials commemorate the deaths in the 1914–18 War of the Rev. Edward Davies and Wilfred Price.

pastorate, in 1907, new Trustees were appointed. [Appendix I] All twelve are farmers, and all were resident in either the parish of Glasbury or Llanigon.

Following a gap of about eight years **Alexander Leitch** (1884–1972) became minister from 1920–29 and lived at Park View, Three Cocks. A Scotsman from Paisley, he trained at Dunoon College. After Glasbury, he moved to Churches in Newport, finally retiring to Knighton. He is buried at Norton Parish Church.⁴⁶ His successor was **Clifford Morris Hitchings** who had a short ministry 1929–32 before moving to England where he had two more pastorates.⁴⁷ The 1930s were a critical time for most Breconshire Churches due to the national Depression which affected not only the industrial areas but caused a slump in agriculture, prompting people this time to move to the Midlands and the south of England⁴⁸ so that by 1940, membership of Penyrheol was down to 30 with 10 scholars.⁴⁹

John Pritchard (1906–80), after training at Cardiff Baptist College, was, for thirty-nine years from 1934, the longest serving minister of Penyrheol with Treble Hill.⁵⁰ In 1947 he undertook the additional pastorate of Tabernacle, Talgarth until his retirement from full-time ministry in 1973. For many years he was Secretary of the Breconshire Baptist Association and continued conducting services locally well into retirement. He lived at Ffordd-las, Glasbury, and after his death in 1980 his

ashes were taken to the Lleyn near his birthplace, but his wife Margaret outlived him until 2007 and is buried at Penyrheol. He is still remembered as a faithful and caring pastor. It would have been early in his ministry that Lilian May Price, Cefn Farm, was baptised at the Dipping Pool, thought to be the last baptism at this site, and for Penyrheol the last in the 20th century. During Pritchard's pastorate further alterations were made to the chapel: the gallery was removed and the entrance with a new porch moved from the west side-wall to the north end, as seen today. During the work, services were held at Cefn Farm, the home of Frank Price (d.2005) who was secretary for about thirty years. An extant photograph shows the Rev John Pritchard with Mrs Ann Price of Newcourt Farm, the oldest and longest serving member at that time, reopening the chapel. This probably occurred in November 1948. During the 1960s, the Powys Family History Society did a survey of Penyrheol's burial ground and 229 gravestones were recorded, with subsequent publication in a handbook.⁵¹ Since then another 36 burials have taken place, and the Society intends to update the previous records. The memorial inscriptions recorded provide another source for the names and homes of the people who supported Penyrheol from its beginnings to the present.

In the years between 1973 and 1981 Penyrheol was again without a permanent minister; membership dropped to 10 with no scholars recorded.⁵² Services were held once a week in most months until 1978 when twice a month became the normal practice.⁵³ The Church Anniversary and the Harvest Festival services were always well supported by well-wishers. During this time John Pritchard, now retired, continued to conduct services until his death in 1980, and lay-preachers were employed. This period also saw a break with the past and the bequest of Thomas Williams. The County History, (1911), in its brief account of Penyrheol Church, mentions that it was *endowed with Island Farm, 73 acres . . . and ,300 on Mortgage*.⁵⁴ How and when this occurred is not given but on the evidence of the 'Memoir' mentioned earlier it was probably connected and contemporary with the legacy of Thomas Williams of the Island who died in 1788.⁵⁵ In the available account books one sees regular payments from the Island during 1970–83.⁵⁶ However, in 1982 solicitor's correspondence reveals that, due to the large cost of upkeep, the Church is considering selling the farm.⁵⁷ Eventually this happened and the proceeds were invested to give a regular return.

On the 30th October 1982 **Terence J Matthews** after training at the Baptist College, Cardiff, was inducted at Maesyberllan to serve as minister of Glasbury, Penyrheol, Maesyberllan and Llangors Churches. Demands on his time meant that his services at Penyrheol were restricted to one, occasionally two, a month but others were conducted by Norman Lloyd Davies, Watergate, Brecon, and often by Mrs Kingdom, Hay, as well as other lay-preachers. In 1993 the Church transferred its trusteeship to The Welsh Baptist Union Corporation Ltd.⁵⁸ In 2005 Penyrheol chapel was registered for solemnizing marriages, and several were



Figure 6 The Reverend Graham Wise and Terrance Matthews baptising one of the group of four women and one man on 14 June 2009.

Photo by Godfrey Harris

conducted by Terence Matthews, the first being of his daughter. Due to ill-health, he resigned from full-time ministry in 2000 but he continues to conduct services. During his pastorate the membership remained at about twelve⁵⁹ but by 2007 it was down to six.⁶⁰ Although no scholars are recorded for several decades, a Sunday School was revived at Treble Hill during the 1990s when about twelve children attended.

In October 2006 **Graham Wise**, having served as a minister in six Churches in England, was inducted to the group pastorate of the Churches of the Breconshire Baptist Association, serving seven until April 2009. He has often conducted services at Penyrheol, and will continue to do so after the official appointment ends.

The month of June 2009 proved to be a high point in the history of Penyrheol. On the 14th, one man and four women from the locality were baptised by Graham Wise assisted by Terence Matthews using a portable swimming pool in an outdoor service (see photograph). These baptisms were the first held at Penyrheol for about seventy years. (See under **John Pritchard** for the previous one.) The five were received as members the following Sunday. On Saturday 20th Graham Wise conducted a marriage when over a hundred people crowded into the chapel.

The Church, now with ten members (see Appendix II) continues to meet once a month with congregations of about twelve but the annual Anniversary and Harvest services attract many supporters.

Acknowledgments

My thanks are due to the following:

Mrs Jean Davies, Church Secretary, for use of Church documents, and for personal reminiscences;

Baptist Union of Wales, Carmarthen; Regents Park College, Oxford; Powys Family History Society for access to their records.

R. F. PETER POWELL

Notes

Place-names from original sources are quoted unaltered whereas those in the script are as on modern maps, sometimes amended to conform to the rules in the *Gazeteer of Welsh Place-names* UWP 1967.

Throughout this paper, Church – earlier sometimes a Cause – refers to a group of believers, and Meeting House or Chapel where they met and worshipped.

¹ Davies P, 'Episodes in the History of Breconshire Dissent', *Brycheiniog III*, p.19 but for a fuller account, see Owen B G, *The Ilston Book*, NLW, 1996, p. 32.

² *Ibid.*, p. 18.

³ John M, ed., *Welsh Baptist Studies*, Cardiff 1976, p. 53.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 55.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 56.

⁶ *Brycheiniog*, op.cit., p. 26.

⁷ Thomas J, *Hanes y Bedyddwyr yng Nghymru*, Pontypridd 1885, p. 163.

⁸ Thomas J, *History of the Baptist Association in Wales 1650–1790*, London 1795, p. 56.

⁹ *Dictionary of Welsh Biography down to 1940*, Cymmrodorion, London 1959.

¹⁰ *Hanes*, op.cit., p. 435.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 435.

¹² Powys Family History Society, *Monumental Inscriptions*, 1995, Glasbury: Penyrheo Baptist Chapel, No 1098.

¹³ *Ibid.*, No 1099.

¹⁴ *Dictionary*, op.cit.

¹⁵ Jones D, *Hanes y Bedyddwyr yn Neheubarth Cymru*, Caerfyrddin 1839, p. 797.

¹⁶ *The Annual Report of the Committee of the Baptist College Cardiff 1938*, List of Ministers Educated at the College, Abergavenny Academy (1807–36).

¹⁷ Census Return for the Parish of Glasbury, 1851.

¹⁸ Powys Family History Society, op.cit., No 989.

¹⁹ Abergavenny Academy, op.cit.

²⁰ *Baptist Manual* for 1855.

²¹ Leitch D, *An Outline History of Treble Hill Baptist Church, Glasbury*, unpublished 1997.

²² *Y Greal* (Welsh Baptist periodical, 1831–55).

²³ *Ibid.* 1833, 1837.

²⁴ *Seren Gomer* (Welsh Baptist periodical, 1851 B present) 1860.

²⁵ Baptist Union of Great Britain: Handbook [BH] 1861.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 1862, pp. 3,4.

²⁷ Leitch op.cit.

²⁸ *Dyddiadur a Llwyfr Undeb Bedyddwyr Cymru* (Obituaries of Ministers) 1884–1985 unpublished.

²⁹ Leitch op.cit.

- ³⁰ BH, 1865.
- ³¹ Leitch op.cit.
- ³² Ibid.
- ³³ Census 1871.
- ³⁴ Bassett T M, *The Welsh Baptists*, Swansea 1977, pp. 337–9.
- ³⁵ *T Greal* op.cit. 1872.
- ³⁶ Ibid., 1875, 1884.
- ³⁷ Baptist Union of Wales Handbook [BUW] 1890.
- ³⁸ *Dyddiadur*, op.cit.
- ³⁹ BH, 1944.
- ⁴⁰ BUW, 1895
- ⁴¹ BUW, 1901
- ⁴² Penyrheol Baptist Church [PBC] Documents held by the current Secretary: Members Contributions Register, May 1902 B May 1939.
- ⁴³ BUW, 1904–25.
- ⁴⁴ *Royal Commission on the Church of England and other Religious Bodies in Wales & Monmouthshire* 1910.
- ⁴⁵ Leitch op.cit.
- ⁴⁶ Ibid.
- ⁴⁷ BH, 1944.
- ⁴⁸ Davies J, *A History of Wales*, Penguin 1993, p. 586.
- ⁴⁹ BUW, 1944.
- ⁵⁰ BUW, 1935–73.
- ⁵¹ Powys Family History Society, op.cit.
- ⁵² BUW, 1975.
- ⁵³ PBC, Financial Ledgers 1970–95.
- ⁵⁴ Jones T, *A History of the County of Brecknock*, Glanusk Edition 1911, Vol.III, p.93.
- ⁵⁵ Powys Family History Society, op.cit. No 1099.
- ⁵⁶ PBC, Financial Ledgers 1970–95.
- ⁵⁷ PBC, Miscellaneous Correspondence 1982.
- ⁵⁸ Ibid., 1993.
- ⁵⁹ BUW, 1990–2000.
- ⁶⁰ BUW, 2007.

Appendix I

LISTS OF TRUSTEES 1854 & 1907

Memorandum of the Choice and Appointment of Trustees . . . of the Chapel of Penyr Heol . . . used by a Society or Congregation of Protestant Dissenters of the Particular Baptist Denomination . . . at a meeting held on 13. 5. 1907. The Reverend Edward Davies, Woodvilla, parish of Tregoyd & Velindre, Chairman.

Trustees at the last appointment on 3. 6. 1854

William Edwards	Bwlchywaun, Talgarth	Farmer
Reverend William Richards	Minister of the Gospel	
William Morgan	Maesdorglwyd	Farmer
Isaac Jones	The Island	Farmer
David Greenow	Blaenygedig	Farmer
Thomas Greenow	Blaenygedig	Farmer
Thomas Kinsey	Wenallt	Farmer
Peter Greenow	Maescoch	Farmer
James Powell	Cwm Brecon	Shoemaker
William Price	Maesdorglwyd	Labourer
William Saunders	Cwmcoynant	Servant in Husbandry
William Price	Noyadd	Farmer
William Harries		Carpenter

First: Old continuing Trustees. None

Second: New Trustees now chosen and appointed.

Ebenezar Jones	Maesyglade	Farmer
William Price	Newcourt	Farmer
William Morgan	Maesdorglwyd	Farmer
Thomas Lloyd	Pennant	Farmer
Evan Greenhow	Blaenygedy	Farmer
Arthur Price	Lower Island	Farmer
Thomas Price	Llwynfilly	Farmer
John Davies	Llanthomas Road	Retired Farmer
Phillip Price	Penyworloddserth	Farmer
Albert Saunders	Cwmcoynant	Farmer
James Greenhow	Blaenygedy	Farmer
John Griffiths	Cwmbach	Farmer

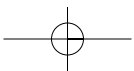
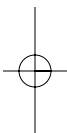
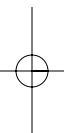
Appendix II

LIST OF MEMBERS & TRUSTEES 2009

Tudor Greenhow	Felindre	Trustee
Elvet Jones	Tregoyd	Trustee
Frederick Powell	Llanigon	Trustee
Blodwen Vaughan	Pen-y-cwm	
Jean Davies	Whitney-on-Wye	Church Secretary

THOSE BAPTISED 14.6.2009

Kathryn Clifton	Llanigon
Elizabeth Evans	Talgarth
Christine Mottran	Felindre
Paul Outhwaite	Felindre
Rosemary Vaughan	Llanigon



EVAN JONES, TY'N-Y-PANT, LLANWRTYD: THE FARMER FOLK HISTORIAN

That corner of north Breconshire, extending westwards from Builth to the Sugar Loaf, and northwards from Maesmynys to Abergwesyn, and known historically as Cantref Buallt, has had its share of local historians from D. L. Wooding¹ to Ruth Bidgood.² It is a distinctive region of the county and it had an identity of its own until the Act of Union in 1536.

For the last three years I have been privileged to read and edit the work of another remarkable historian, Evan Jones (1850–1928) or to give him his bardic name, Ieuan Buallt. His family deposited over a thousand items at the Museum of Welsh Life at Saint Fagan's, Cardiff, consisting mostly of school exercise books and miscellaneous papers running in total to approximately 300,000 words.

He was a farmer at (the old) Ty'n-y-pant a mile or so east of Llanwrtyd and according to his minister, the Revd. Aman Jones, in an obituary notice,³ a successful farmer who nevertheless found time to pursue a wide range of interests which are reflected in his writings. His wife was Ann Morgan from Penlan, Llanafan Fawr and according to Emrys, one of their sons, in an interview conducted in 1971⁴ 'My father used to come into the house at 3.00 o'clock to attend to his books. I never remember him providing an armful of hay for the cattle.' The implication of this must be that his wife was largely responsible for running the farm, enabling him to pursue archaeological and other research which he undertook with disciplined enthusiasm. Emrys notes, 'My father would carry pieces of paper in his pockets with him everywhere and I saw him, many times, when in the middle of some task or other, standing and writing something down.' He enjoyed constructing drains and planting hedges on the farm. According to Aman Jones he also loved planting trees and he took pleasure in carving wood. 'He mastered the craft of working with withies; in fact, he was conversant with most ancient crafts being saddened to see them disappear. He gathered examples of these crafts and exhibited them at his farm. I have seen his collections of ancient coins, old hand mills, old scales and stone weights, and many more fine objects of a pre-industrial culture . . . He knew the name of every farm and field, every river, brook and pool in the area and he could trace most family trees in his locality . . . He could read music and he wrote a number of hymn tunes; he also held a class for teaching sol-fa . . . He recognized birds and he constructed artistic nests for them around his home'.

A Remarkable Man

It was suggested to me by the archivist at the Museum of Welsh Life at St. Fagan some twelve years ago that (since I was retired) I might wish to analyse Evan Jones's

writings and prepare a selection of his work for publication. I was unable to respond at the time, but three years or so ago I found myself acquainting myself with the material and being astounded by the range and perception. It was obvious that he had spent a lifetime collecting the material but most of his writing was produced between 1890 and 1928. He himself admits in the only book which he published in 1925 – a collection of sayings, proverbs, verses etc. called *Doethineb Llafar* (Oral Wisdom) – that he had a strong, retentive memory in his youth, and that this stood him in good stead throughout his life. One of the most valuable aspects of this faculty was his ability to recall conversations he had with older members of the community, especially in Abergwesyn, Llanwrtyd, Llangamarch and Tir Abad when he was a young man. So we discover that many of the events and customs he describes enable us to enter the world of the latter end of the eighteenth century. In all the material, he introduces us to a way of life which in all its richness and diversity is foreign to us today. One of the questions which troubled me as I studied his work was why he should spend so much time and effort researching and recording the history and lives of people in this part of Wales and seemingly without thought of publication. The conclusion I have come to is that he had a passionate desire to preserve the story of Cantref Buallt for future generations for he could sense that even in his own day the way of life he knew was in jeopardy, and although he was writing in Welsh – and excellent Welsh at that – he knew that depopulation and the enveloping flood of the English language were destroying much of what he valued. His work therefore is a mine of information about social customs of the time and he manages to tell his story with verve and not a little humour. It is only rarely that he projects himself or his opinions into any of his accounts. He is reticent even to talk about his family, apart from an honest and sometimes hilarious account of his own descent on his father's side from Cochiaid Tywi (The Redheads of Tywi). He has the innate qualities of a good historian attempting to repeat dispassionately what he had seen or heard, although we must not conclude from this that he was without convictions. After all, he was the product of a robust nonconformity but that does not preclude him from writing with sensitivity about the Anglicanism of his district. Indeed he sympathetically describes many of its churches and quotes extensively from the parish records, some from the eighteenth century.

His command of language is impressive, assuming that he had only the barest of educational opportunities – he was indeed largely self-educated – and his prose is exact when he describes characters or coins or archaeological finds. Much of his tales become close to being short stories under his hand, and his command of local idioms and metaphors is sound. His detailed descriptions of the history of the wooden plough, with local references throughout, or of the great flood of 1814, for example, are detailed and captivating. He preserves a number of technical terms that used to apply to agriculture and to other rural industries.

In this context it is worth recording that he played a leading role in the remarkable Summer School held at Llanwrtyd from 1919 until 1933 (with four exceptions). This brought together academics and interested students of all ages from all over Wales. The body behind this school was the National Union for Welsh Societies – a body, according Marion Löffler,⁵ which ‘was of the greatest importance in establishing Welsh in education quite apart from encouraging cultural activities of all kinds’. Evan Jones was respected by the organizers who entrusted him with a number of lectures and with arranging visits to places of archaeological, historical and geographical interest. Tŷ'n-y-pant, with all its treasures would, of course, be included.

It is important to note that he was an avid reader and he built a substantial library of books which were later donated to the National Library at Aberystwyth. These ranged from the *Cambrian Journal* to the writings of Giraldus Cambrensis, from *Ancient Stone Implements* to the score of *Stabat Mater*, and a whole diversity of Welsh and English books and journals both ancient and contemporary. He kept a careful list of all the books he bought, how much they cost and where he purchased them. There is no doubt that his linguistic skills were finely developed by his reading, and he is always ready to acknowledge his indebtedness to other authors and equally willing to disagree with them on occasion.

It is clear that he read widely in archaeology. He consulted past issues of *Archaeologia Cambrensis* for instance. His catholic collection of musical scores is striking as is his compilation of mostly local poetry. He was so obviously a cultured man firmly grounded in his own locality. The scope of his papers is wide but they can best be categorized under the headings of Customs of the Farm; Customs of the Home; Sheep Farmers and Farming (and he has much to say about these because of his intimate knowledge of the wildly mountainous area known today as the Cambrian Mountains, but known in Welsh as Elenydd); Religion; Antiquities; Histories of Chapels and Churches; Old Farm Ruins; Old Church Ruins; Poetry; Music; Rivers, Streams and Pools; List of farm names in his District; History of Education; Old Woollen and Fulling Mills; Courtship, Marriage and Birth; Death Customs; Roman and other ancient roads; Old Games; Superstitions, Premonitions and Enchantments; Murders in the Mountain; a Rich Array of Biographies;



Figure 1 Evan Jones

Photo: St Fagans: National History Museum.

Schools and Teachers. This list could be extended but the localized, descriptive quality of the writing cannot be captured by such headings.

How then could we summarize his achievement? He was primarily a collector and recorder. He gathered information, recorded what he learned and eventually writes about them. The collector in him not only gathered facts but anecdotes and local histories. He collects, for instance, lists of all the mills that existed in Cantref Buallt and also those which were defunct in his day as well as giving details of the families who lived in them; again he lists the names of nonagenarians living in the same district between 1783 and 1897 – and he names 83 of them. He also collected archaeological items, ranging from coins to querns and his home at Ty'n-y-pant became a minor museum, for, as his passion for artefacts became known, many farmers, in particular, would bring to him finds that they had acquired when ploughing or digging. Some of these were transferred to the National Museum at Cardiff.



Figure 2 This photograph can be found at St. Fagans National History Museum with the caption 'Ty'n y Pant (*old house*) c.1910'. It is thought that the two men in the photograph are the sons of Evan and Ann Jones – Afan on the right and Emrys on the left.

Photo: St Fagans: National History Museum

Evan Jones is an example of the highly intelligent countryman who knew and appreciated his own environment and who was willing to educate himself in order to better understand. I remain astonished by his achievements and to enable readers of *Brycheiniog* to savour his writings I provide the following samples.

Examples of his Writings

He had a passion for archaeology which was outstanding. W. E. Hoyle and Mortimer Wheeler of the newly established National Museum paid a visit to Tŷ'n-y-pant to view his collections. He must have roamed the mountains and hills which surround Cantref Buallt to evaluate various prehistoric remains, be they stone circles, Roman roads, stone crosses, stone sepulchres, long barrows, prehistoric hearths, tumuli, various large stones and ancient mounds, menhirs, lake dwellings and other ancient remnants. He measures everything he finds in detail and also attaches any local legends to them. He provides details of their locations.

For instance, he writes of the stone he knew at Maes-y-gwaelod in the parish of Llanwrtyd in this way:

This is the largest long stone in the history of all the menhirs in Cantref Buallt. It is eight feet tall above ground, and it is probable that it extends three feet beneath the ground. It is eleven and half feet in its circumference at its base. As to its shape, it is nearly square. It is constructed of a fine conglomerate. It stands on a prominent place at the point of a watershed. Southward from it and about a stone's throw away there runs a Roman road, crossing the Cerdin brook below. A simple local tradition exists concerning this stone, that it visits the river nearby to bathe when the first cockcrow is heard every morning.

Once he has surveyed a number of these stones and noted their character and position carefully, he comes, in a footnote, to his general conclusion:

Once I had located and attempted to measure the various menhirs in the Buallt Hundred, it might not be inappropriate to write a few further comments concerning these ancient stones.

On observing them, I saw that all, without exception, faced the south-west, for which there must have been a reason. Also, most of them have been placed at the point of a watershed.

I believe it is also interesting to note that the lesser stones that stand near the large stones lie on the same side, that is in a north westerly direction, without exception.

His accuracy of observation leads him to attempt generalizations, and given his limited education in these matters, prove to be thought-provoking and illuminating. Similarly he writes of an Ancient Circle:

On crossing Gwaun-pen-cae, Penrhiwgoch, Llangamarch a little while back, suddenly and accidentally, I came across an ancient circle, or so I believe. It is not obvious from a distance, and only attracts the attention of the eagle-eyed.

On measuring it I found that it was eighteen yards in circumference. On its southern side there is a gap three feet wide. In the precise centre there is a small round hollow, about three feet in diameter. After digging into it about a foot I came upon black soot a

foot and a half in depth, and it contained many small pieces of charcoal. Around it there was blue-grey clay, about five inches thick, in the shape of a cauldron, about a foot and a half in depth, and a foot and a half wide I should think. The cauldron, if it is appropriate thus to call it, had retained its shape remarkably well.

I replaced all I had dug carefully and in order. I would like to gain further information from an experienced person regarding this ancient circle.

He also examines remains of more recent days. Here we have a description of a Games Mound (*Twmpath Chwarae*):

A few steps southwards from the church of Llanafan Fawr there is a circular mound with a flat summit. It stands a little above the surface of the ground. Surrounding it is a circle of 120 yards in diameter.

On this mound numerous games and physical competitions would be held in times past, such as weight lifting, throwing bar and crowbar, pulling a copstol (this was an iron part of a plough), wrestling, cock fighting and other feats in times gone by. It was also a popular place for singing and dancing. Chairs would be brought to the edge of the platform for the harpists and fiddlers to enable them to sit to play their instruments. The surface of the ground would be kept bare and a piece of wood used for keeping it level. When the various competitions were being held, the spectators stood in a circle, looking in.

Evan Jones provides a list of the *cistfeini* (small stone sepulchres) known to him in the Hundred of Buallt, and he provides a description of each one. He concludes thus:

Perhaps the cistfaen with the greatest antiquarian interest is that found on the summit of a high mountain to the south west of Pen-rhiw-Ifor, Cwm Irfon, Llanwrtyd. It stands on a hillock on the boundary between Cwm Irfon and Cwmhennog. There was once a cairn of many tons of stones on top of the sepulchre, but some time in the distant past it was opened and at its base part of the cistfaen is still visible. Around the cairn there is a circle of long stones, twenty two in number. Some of these stones rise two feet above the ground but others are nearly completely covered by the outer edge of the cairn. The circle is thirty three yards in diameter. This is the only circular cairn I know of in the whole of the Hundred of Buallt.

He writes, somewhat unexpectedly, about flint manufacturing in Abergwesyn:

There is at Pen-y-twyn, Llanfihangel Abergwesyn, a field called Cae-dol-y-maen which is noted for its flint stones. According to the accounts given by the old parishioners, when this field was being ploughed, there were so many splinters of these stones to be found there that people came from near and far to collect them and to retain them for use with tinder boxes to ignite a flame, according to the old custom before matches were invented. Apart from flint chips, from time to time larger stones of more value and interest would be found, such as flakes, scrapers, arrow heads, and also flint cones with small indentations on them which, according to the practice of flint workers, once they had cut slices from the pyrites, they would dispose of as being worthless.

There was once a house called Dol-y-maen on this field but there was no memory of it on the part of the old people who were alive when I was young, and there are only a

few remains left. It is probable that the flint maker had been here keeping a flint workstation a long time ago.

[This account puzzled me somewhat since I understood that flint would not be found naturally in the geological terrain of the district. I consulted Dr Dyfed Elis-Gruffydd, the well-known expert on the geology of Wales, and he confirmed my suspicions. However he explained how in prehistoric times humans travelled long distances and transported 'manufactured' goods with considerable success. For instance, stone axes manufactured in Penmaen-mawr in north Wales, have been discovered in Czechoslovakia.]

Evan Jones was particularly proud of a Christian cross that came his way. He writes:

Around the year 1873, as Rees and Williams, Pen-lan-wen, Tirabad, were on Cerrig Llwydion on Llwyn-y-fynwent sheep-run on Epynt collecting stones for building, they came across an exceptional and ancient stone. It had fallen and was nearly sunken out of sight into the ground. When they had removed it to the house it was put aside where it lay near the farmhouse for about thirty years.

About the year 1903, however, the stone came into the possession of the writer of this history. It measures four feet and two inches in length, sixteen inches in width at its top end and eleven at its base, seven and a half inches thick at its top and five and half at its base.

This stone has two circles with crosses within them. In the higher cross, between the arms of the cross there are some small marks, like finger tips. Below this there is another circle, but it approximates to a square, containing a less skilful cross than the one above it.

His description coincides with V. E. Nash Williams's classic work *The Early Christian Monuments of Wales* and he dates it from the 7th to the 9th centuries.

Shôn Watcyn's Visit to London

His interest was not confined to various strands of archaeology but extended to other areas which enable us to view a past age with him. He provides profiles of a wide range of characters and their eccentricities that he had heard about or that he had known. One such was Shôn Watcyn. He provides us with his family background before giving an account of his visit to London:

His daughter, Ruth, had become tired of caring barefooted for cattle on the mountain and chasing neighbours' sheep when they entered her grazing and other duties about the small holding, and she felt that she needed to leave to see the world. At this time it was customary to go to London to weed in gardens. Many women and girls would make the annual journey from the mountains of Irfon and Tywi, and the eastern parts of Ceredigion, and they would walk in companies to the gardens of Kent, where they would stay for the summer months preparing vegetables and fruit to be taken to the capital, and they would be paid a good wage and substantial money for their work. Ruth also heard of these high wages and she gained enough confidence to make the adventurous journey.

On arriving in London she was engaged by a wealthy and aristocratic family called

Lord and Lady Goodrich who lived in Regent Street; and by her good behaviour and her honest service, it was not long before she gained the respect and favour of the family, and she remained in their service for many years, earning an honourable and substantial salary.

When Ruth had spent some time in the great city and her family not having heard from her apart from a word occasionally brought by the 'garden girls', her dear old father felt he had to see her. After considerable deliberation he commences the journey – on his little pony with a home-made halter of horse hair and two saddle bags, one with rations for the journey and the other with little gifts for Ruth.

He arrived in London after a long journey, and tradition tells us that he found accommodation at the Welsh Harp, a Welsh hostelry where drovers used to stay. From here he placed the bags on his shoulders and following many enquires he found himself in Regent Street. But although he had found the street he did not have the house number. House numbers had never entered his mind. By this time the old Welsh countryman was perplexed, and he was not sure what to do. He walked thoughtfully along the street for some time, not knowing which door to knock. But at last he thought of a plan which was to start at the end of the street calling her name: 'Ruth Shôn Watcyn'. Then he would walk a few paces and call again 'Ruth Shôn Watcyn'. After pausing for a response, he would move forward again and call 'R-u-th Sh-ô-ô-n Wa-at-cyn'.

Naturally he attracted a good deal of attention particularly from children but Shôn Watcyn persevered and eventually a face appeared at one of the windows. Ruth had recognized his voice and she rushed out to greet her father. Then Lady Goodrich came out into the street and invited him into the house, saying 'Come in, bundle and all'. He stayed at the house for some time, visiting some of the wonders of London, sometimes in Ruth's company and sometimes on his little pony.

Carrying by Ladder

In the past, when a man had followed a hateful practice like beating his wife, or being caught in adultery with his neighbour's wife, he would be conveyed on a ladder through the village by night.

This was last practised around 1860 in Llangamarch. There lived a man near there who, under the influence of alcohol used to beat his wife and his small stepson and that in a most callous and merciless manner. Eventually, some of the parishioners decided to carry him on a ladder. After calling some of the most mischievous characters together, and forming a committee or two to plan, a crowd met on an agreed night, and made for the culprit's house and entered it boldly. They dragged him from beside his wife in bed, and tied him hand and foot to a ladder. Then they carried him on their shoulders towards the village, singing verses that had been written for the occasion as they proceeded.

When they arrived at the New Inn, they placed him to rest for a little while on the horse-block. Now, as can well be imagined, a fairly large crowd had gathered. The man on the ladder deemed himself to be a bit of a singer, and in that position, on his back on the ladder, he was forced to sing a tune. Someone gave out a verse of a hymn, and amidst the jeering and great amusement of the crowd, he sang the first verse through. Then the procession continued, aiming for his house, and on reaching the front door he was released. His name was David Davies, or 'Dettws' as he was known to everyone.

I am aware that these quotations provide only the briefest understanding of Evan Jones's huge undertaking but I hope that they give us a flavour of his work.

HERBERT HUGHES

Notes

¹ David Lewis Wooding (1828–91) genealogist, historian, book collector, and shopkeeper who was born in Abergwesyn but lived in Beulah. His extensive writing remains unpublished. (See *Y Bywgraffiadur Cymreig*, 1950–1970).

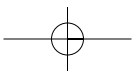
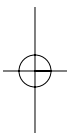
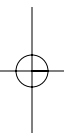
² Ruth Bidgood (1922–). A notable poet who has written many memorable poems about Cantref Buallt. She has also contributed numerous articles to *Brycheiniog* and written a superb history of Abergwesyn entitled *Parishes of the Buzzard* (Port Talbot, 2000).

³ *Y Tyst* March 1, 1928.

⁴ The interview was recorded by Vincent H. Phillips of the Museum of Welsh Life (tape AWC 3321).

⁵ Marion Löffler, *Iaith nas Arferir, Iaith Farw Yw* (The University of Wales Centre for Advanced Welsh and Celtic Studies, 1995).

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THE MADAM PATTI EISTEDDFOD, BRECON 1889

The following extract from The Penny Illustrated Paper and Illustrated Times (London, England), Saturday, September 7, 1889, pg. 235, Issue 1475, was researched by T. Thirgood, and appears with the permission of The British Library to use the article in this Journal.

GALLANT WALES EN FETE

(From our Special Correspondent)

The National Eisteddfod at Brecon

In Wales, of late, holiday (not to say motley) has been the only wear. Those who have followed the footsteps of George Borrow in the admirable account of his Welsh adventures, "Wild Wales" through the length and breadth of the Principality, know that there, as elsewhere, a spirited and restless rivalry exists between North and South. Recently North Wales scored brilliantly with Lovely Llangollen and Beautiful Bala: now

South Wales has had its Turn

with the National Eisteddfod at Brecon and, having fine resources within itself as the residence at Craig-y-Nos of the Queen of Song, who generously gave lent her victorious aid, it is not wonderful if it seems after all to have won the day. In point of scenery South Wales is generally thought not to compare with North: and those who recently turned southwards to Brecon probably thought to find the surroundings comparatively tame. If so, to reach Brecon with the sun shining across the

Brecon Beacons

and the fair green fields between, and with the festive flags flying in the picturesque little town, must have been something of a revelation. And Brecon and its surroundings are only a small part, moreover, in the wonderful panorama of South Wales!

Crossing the mountains afoot, and descending upon the town, with the ivy-grown castle and two or three church steeples as landmarks, I found on the opening day of the Eisteddfod a delightful

Summerly Air of Holiday

pervading the place. Sounds of music – the strains of a distant military band, of choral voices, and, at intervals, of a harp – floated on the air, and completed this holiday feeling. In the streets one found further unmistakeable signs: beggars of all possible odours and contortions, idle saunterers, tourists, pretty girls in pretty frocks, and everywhere flags – like the beggars, of all colours. For its size, Brecon stretches out its length over a great space of ground, but, once in its centre, one need not go far during the Eisteddfod

before reaching the triumphal arch inscribed

“Welcome, Patti-Nicolini!”

and, passing through the arch with the crowd, one soon reached the huge pavilion where for four days music and sweet poetry were to agree and sometimes (as in the various choral and other competitions) agree to differ. Inside the pavilion the first impressions were of an immense dome of canvas covering an arena set out somewhat in the fashion of a Greek theatre, but with the circle there used for chorus filled with seats, while on the stage pianos and other such modern paraphernalia of amusement looked at first somewhat incongruous, if suggestive. Two mottoes in Welsh adjoining further eked out the somewhat foreign impression of the whole. With the sun shining in its most royal way to cast a pleasant radiance within this air-castle of the Muses, while a cool breeze fluttered in the canvas and tempered the heat, the spectator might well find this a fit place for national festival on the part of a people in whose music and poetry the sun and the open air have always played so chief a part. But even the semi-AI fresco arena of the Eisteddfod pavilion is not free and unconfined enough for one of the most antique and indispensable parts of the whole function, which tradition commands to be held “Yng ngwyneb Haul, Llygad Goleuni, “ which, being interpreted, means, “in the face of the sun, the eye of light!” so

The Gorsedd

as it is called, which always forms the opening ceremony of every Eisteddfod, was held there on the castle mound, where the surroundings were well in keeping with the “Bards and Druids of the Isle of Britain” who, with their long grey hair and mystic sword and harps, made a group in the morning sunshine that looked antique and picturesque in the extreme. Without describing the quaint ritual of the Gorsedd in detail, which indeed would take a treatise in itself, it is enough to recall its mystic circle of stones, with the Runic rock in the middle (supposed by some to have a symbolic reference to the sun and the other planets), the sounding of the trumpet, “horn of the land,” the offering of the sublime Theistic Gorsedd prayer, and then the mounting to the Runic stone of the venerable Arch-Druid, “Clwydfardd,” who, unsheathing the bardic sword, cried aloud thrice in stentorian tones,

“Oes Heddwch?”

(Is there Peace?) eliciting each time from the bystanders the response “Heddwch” (There is Peace!).

But to gain the full interest of the Gorsedd one must be under the immediate spell of the old Welsh bards, who still realise so wonderfully the mediæval idea of the poet. Clwydfardd, the Arch-Druid, is in his eighty-ninth year, and carries his age with handsome Merlin-like dignity, his bushy white hair and beard setting forth features of great simplicity and sweetness of expression. Next in order, Hwfa Môn is perhaps

the most familiar figure, whose powerful face, clean-shaven and set forth by flowing grey locks, might suggest something between the master of the pulpit and the popular actor, Indeed, both Clwydfardd and Hwfa Môn, and with them several other bards, are ministers of the gospel as well as ministers of the Muses. The Gorsedd generally concludes with the recital of original Welsh stanzas, called Englynion, by the various bards, and with Penillion singing – the last one of the most popular parts of the whole function. That past master of Penillion singing,

Eos Morlais

was in great form in Brecon, and his impromptu stanzas, sung to the accompaniment of the Gorsedd harper, were as full of wit and poetic point as ever. It will be remembered, too, that in Penillion singing it is the harper who chooses the tune, to which the singer must join with according stanzas as soon as the air has been played over once in prelude. The Englynion recited and the Penillion sung, the band strikes up “The March of the Men of Harlech”, and the bards and others form in procession, and march through the town, amid great enthusiasm, to

The Eisteddfod Pavilion

There follows a programme with a considerable colouring of these picturesque bardic performances, but now added to by the characteristic Eisteddfod competitions in vocal and instrumental music, in poetry and art,

over which the excitement of the friends of the competitors often waxed to fever heat. The grand climacteric tussle between the great choirs of from 150 to 200 voices did not come off till the fourth and last day; but before this there were innumerable interesting minor tournaments of song, whilst on the second day the generous promise of Madame Patti to come over from Craig-y-Nos and sing created an intensity of excitement such as even Patti herself could only produce in musical Wales.

The Queen of Song

came, indeed, in truly royal mood, and she brought Queen’s weather with her, for the intermittent sunshine became permanent and brilliant as soon as she set foot in Brecon town. As the time for her arrival in the pavilion drew near, the regular Eisteddfodic proceedings became hopelessly demoralised, until the happy thought struck “Mabon” (Mr. Abraham, M.P. who acted as conductor for the day, Lord Tredegar being the President) to lead off some of the Welsh national songs, the whole audience of 8000 people joining in with concerted voices with indescribable effect. At last, about two o’clock, the triumphant strains of the band and of loud cheering without told that Patti was imminent. A moment later, and preceded by Mr Ganz, the well-known conductor, and other well-known people in the musical world, Madame Patti appeared, escorted by the Mayor in his red robes, while Signor Nicolini followed. At this the audience, obeying

a Napoleonic nod from “Mabon”, leapt to their feet, cheering wildly, and the commotion did not cease until Patti came forward to the little dais in front of the stage, and Mr Ganz began the accompaniment of “Ah! non creda,” on the piano. Used as the great singer is to magnificent audiences, probably she never had such a perfectly responsive one before. When she presently turned from “La Sonnambula” and sang “The Last Rose of Summer” and “Home, Sweet Home,” as it might be thought they had never been sung before, and perhaps would never be sung again, the most composed and correct of personages lost their heads, and cheered to the echo. But it was when

“Mabon”

made his last bold stroke, and hazarded a daring suggestion in handing a MS copy of the score and words of “Hen Wlad fy Nhadau” – “Old Land of my Fathers” – the Welsh patriotic song, to Madame Patti, that the wildest outburst took place. Though, as she exclaimed, with a little despairing gesture, she had never seen the song before, after a momentary glance she came forward to sing it, and did so with superb effect, the audience, led by “Mabon,” joining in the chorus. With this, and the cheers (and it may be added, the tears) of gratitude that followed, one felt that the Eisteddfod fairly reached its consummation. When Madame Patti had listened to a harp contest, after which she kissed the little boy who won the prize, and the audience had sung the famous old hymn “O Fryniau

Caersalem” she departed; and I, for one, found it best to retire to the slopes of the Brecknock Beacons to think over what had taken place.

On the following day the proceedings were somewhat less exuberant; but the

Chairing of the Bard

led, as always, to a sense unique in its mingling of old and new, mediæval and modern. After the usual trumpet summons for the assembling of the bards, and when these later followers of Taliesin and Merlin had ranged themselves in a semicircle about the empty bardic chair which awaited its winner and occupant, as yet undisclosed, the adjudicators advanced to announce who the fortunate competitor was. It proved to be the Rev. Evan Rees of Cardiff; but he was, unluckily, not present and had to be “chaired” by proxy, which somewhat robbed the proceedings of their interest, although the usual ceremony was gone through with all imaginable unction. Clwydfardd and Hwfa Môn with much ceremony led the deputy winner to the chair, and then the bardic sword was twice passed over his head, and the initiation was complete. The delivery of Englynion – the intricate, epigrammatic stanzas before referred to, composed by the bards as they stood around, in honour of the “chair” – then followed, and with the singing of the churning song by Mrs Glanffirwd Thomas, who sang her husband’s stanzas with great spirit, the ceremony concluded. It may be mentioned that the subject for the prize ode of 1889 was “The Welsh

Bible,” and that the winning poem was said by the knowing ones in Welsh poetry to be something more than an ordinary Eisteddfod *tour de force* of rhetoric and metre – indeed, a poem that would probably live. As the prize poem of the following day, on the subject of Llewelyn, also proved to be a really inspired production, it is seen that Welsh poetry is by no means in a state of decadence which is more than can be said, if certain critics are right, for English poetry.

But the select audience of the Welsh poets is comparatively small compared with that which music commands at these gatherings. On the fourth and last day of the Eisteddfod the

Chief Choral Competition

between eight of the leading Welsh choirs, each of which numbered from 150 to 200 singers, drew together an immense concourse of people, from whom the cheers and counter-cheers, as one choir or another came forward to sing, must have echoed to the heights of the Brecknock Beacons. The eight competing choirs were from Cardiff, Carmarthen, Dowlais (two), Llanelly, Porth and Cymmer, Rhondda, and Swansea Valley; and, after some debate, the four judges awarded the first prize to Rhondda and the second to the Porth and Cymmer Choir.

This terminated the actual programme of the Eisteddfod, and of the most successful ever held in Wales; though, in the evening, a concert followed as on the previous days. In the brief space that is available here, it has

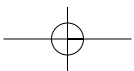
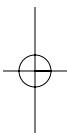
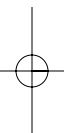


The eisteddfod chair.

been impossible to do more than give a rough general sketch of the whole proceedings. To enumerate in detail the mere competitions – literary, artistic, choral, and so forth – would alone take several columns; but it would be ungracious now to end without a word of praise for the local committee, among them, the Mayor of Brecon and the deputy Mayor, with the Rev. Glanffrwyd Thomas, Rev. Professor Rowlands, “Dewi Môn,” and the local secretary, Mr. Rhys Davies, may be specially mentioned. Brecon, indeed, may well be proud of having achieved so brilliant a success.

Ap Fyrrdin

T. M. THIRGOOD



TWM SIÔN CATI: AMBELL GYSYLLTIAD Â BRYCHEINIOG

Er taw â'r ardal rhwng Rhandir-mwyn a Thregaron y byddwn yn cysylltu Twm Siôn Cati yn bennaf, roedd ganddo gysylltiadau cryf â Brycheiniog yn ogystal. Union bedwar can mlynedd ar ôl ei farwolaeth, mae'n briodol ystyried y cysylltiadau hyn, yn ogystal a chynnig braslun o'r ffeithiau amdano yn hytrach na chanolbwyntio ar y chwedlau yn unig.

Roedd Thomas Jones, a rhoi iddo ei enw iawn, yn fab anghyfreithlon i Siôn ap Dafydd ap Madog ap Hywel Moethe o Borthyffynnon, ger Tregaron, a Chatrin (Cati), merch anghyfreithlon i un o hynafiaid Syr John Wynn o Wydir.

Yn nyddiau Twm Siôn Cati roedd bro ei febyd yn enwog am ladron a herwyr. Roedd y Twm ifanc yn aml mewn helynt a defnyddiai sawl ffordd ddyfeisgar i wneud yn siŵr na fyddai'n cael ei ddal. Ei hoff guddfan oedd ogof ar Dinas, bryn coediog uwchben Rhandir-mwyn. Mae'n bosibl hefyd iddo guddio yn yr ogof rhag erledigaeth grefyddol. Roedd Twm yn Brotestant, ac ymhlith ei ffrindiau roedd y merthyr Piwritanaidd, John Penry, a aned yng Nghefn-brith, ger Llangamarch, Brycheiniog.

Pan oedd y frenhines Gatholig Mari ar yr orsedd, roedd Twm mewn perygl a bu'n rhaid iddo ffoi i Genefa yn y Swistir er mwyn diogelu ei fywyd, ond pan ddaeth Elisabeth I yn frenhines yn 1558, roedd yn ddiogel iddo ddychwelyd. Cafodd bardwn brenhinol ganddi, er na wyddom ni ddim am beth yn hollol.

Roedd Twm Siôn Cati yn gefnder pell i un o ddynion mwyaf galluog a dylanwadol yr oes, sef John Dee. Roedd Dee yn fathemategydd gwyb, yn ogystal â bod yn athronydd, daaryddwr a hynafiaethydd, ac roedd hefyd yn astrolegydd yn llys y Frenhines Elisabeth I. Yn ei ddyddiadur, mae'n cyfeirio sawl gwaith at Twm Siôn Cati, gan nodi taw ddyddiad ei eni oedd 1532. Ar ôl i Dee symud i Fanceinion, mae'n cofnodi yn ei ddyddiadur fod Twm Siôn Cati wedi ymweld ag ef yn 1596, ac yna wedi marchogaeth yn ôl i Gymru i gwrdd â'r gwartheg. Mae hynny'n awgrymu fod Twm yn borthmon.

Efallai taw yn ystod un o'i deithiau porthmona y cyfarfu gyntaf â Joan, ei ail wraig. Roedd hi'n ferch i Syr John Price, Aberhonddu, awdur *Yny llyfyr hwinn* (1546), sef y llyfr cyntaf i'w gyhoeddi yn y Gymraeg. Gwyddys fod Twm wedi treulio rhai blynyddoedd yn Aberhonddu, a bu'n feili (maer) y dref am gyfnod. Yn fwy na thebyg, bu Twm a Joan yn gariadon dros gyfnod hir – efallai pan oedd Twm yn briod â'i wraig gyntaf na wyddom ddim amdani. Gŵr cyntaf Joan oedd Thomas Williams, Ystrad-ffin, Rhandir-mwyn. Yn fuan ar ôl ei farwolaeth ef, priododd Joan a Twm, ond byr fu cyfnod eu priodas. Bu farw Twm ymhen dwy flynedd, ac ymhen fawr o dro priododd Joan â Syr George Devereux, ewythr Iarll Essex.



Llan o'r cerflun
yn Rhandirmwyn.

Y Digrifwr oedd y llyfryn Cymraeg cyntaf i sôn am anturiaethau Twm Siôn Cati. Cafodd ei argraffu ar bapur gwael yn 1811, heb gofnodi enw'r awdur. Ond *The adventures and vagaries of Twm Shon Catti* gan T. J. Llewelyn Prichard, llyfr a ddisgrifiwyd fel nofel gyntaf Cymru, a gyhoeddwyd yn 1828, oedd y llyfr a wnaeth fwyaf i boblogeiddio anturiaethau Twm Siôn Cati. Cyhoeddwyd sawl argraffiad ohono ac yn 1872 cafwyd addasiad Cymraeg gan John Evans (Eilonydd), sef *Difwr-Gampau a Gorchestion yr enwog Twm Shon Catti*, a gyhoeddwyd gan John Pryse o Lanidloes.

Roedd gan Thomas Jeffery Llewelyn Prichard (1790–1862) gysylltiad agos â Brycheiniog. Yn ôl y rhan fwyaf o fywgraffiadau, cafodd ei eni yn y Trallong, ond ymddengys taw yn Llanfair-ym-Muallt y bu hynny – er i'r teulu symud yn ôl i'w wreiddiau yn ardal Pontsenni ymhen ychydig.

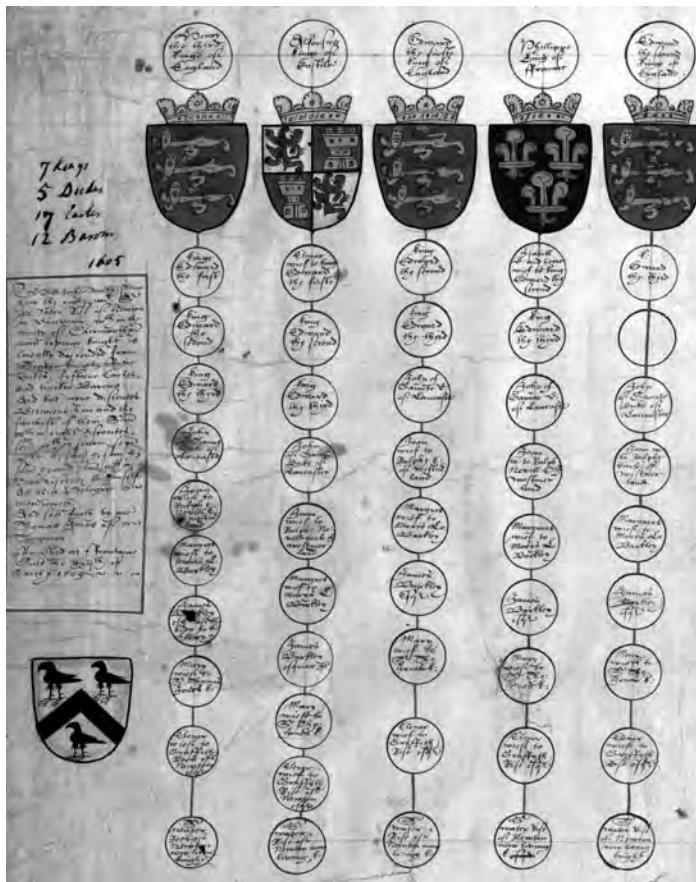
Y tebygolrwydd yw ei fod yn fab i gyfreithiwr o'r enw Thomas Prichard, a oedd â chysylltiadau â'r Trallong, ac Anne, aelod o'r teulu Jeffreys o Lywel. Yr un enw â'i dad oedd gan T. J. Llewelyn Prichard i ddechrau, ond mabwysiadodd enw'r Parchedig Jeffery Llewelyn o

Lywel, un o danysgrifwyr *Welsh Minstrelsy*, sef llyfr o farddoniaeth a gyhoeddwyd gan Prichard yn 1824, sy'n cynnwys cerddi sy'n cyfeirio at amryw o lefydd yng nghyffiniau Llywel a oedd yn gyfarwydd iawn iddo yn ei blentyndod.

Mae'n wir fod Twm Siôn Cati yn gymeriad gwyllt a drygionus yn ei ddyddiau cynnar, ac roedd ei ofn ar bobl gyfoethog a fyddai'n dioddef yn aml oherwydd ei stranciau. Ond yn y diwedd trodd Twm at farddoniaeth, ac enillodd gadair mewn eisteddfod yn Llandaf. Mae'r englyn isod o'i waith, o lawysgrif a gyfansoddwyd tua 1590, yn dadlennu ei fod wedi rhoi'r gorau i'w ffyrdd anystywallt a bellach yn parchu'r gyfraith.

Cadw'r gyfraith faith yr wyf i yn gadarn
a gadael y perthi
nid wyf i ffôl yn rheoli
mewn glas dail mal y gwelaist ti

Roedd Twm Siôn Cati hefyd yn arwyddfardd o fri. Cafodd ei ddisgrifio fel 'y godidocaf a phennaf a pherffeithiaf . . . yng nghelfyddyd arwyddfarddoniaeth'.



Rhôl achau gan Thomas Jones (Twm Siôn Cati), dyddiedig 1605.

Trwy ganiatâd Gwasanaeth Archifau Sir Gaerfyrddin

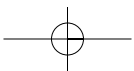
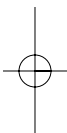
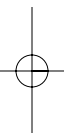
Mae'r rhôl yn y darlun ymhlith o leiaf bymtheg o'i roliau achau herodrol sydd wedi goroesi. Gallai rholiau o'r fath, a ysgrifennid ar femrwn, fod hyd at ddeugain troedfedd o hyd.

Er bod Twm Siôn Cati yn cael ei ddisgrifio'n aml fel 'Robin Hood Cymru' neu 'Rob Roy Cymru', mae'n haeddu gwell parch a chydabyddiaeth. Ac nid oes reswm yn y byd pam na ddylai gael ei gydnabod yn un o feibion mabwysiedig teilyngaf Brycheiniog.

HANDEL JONES

A translation of the above is available on the website of the Brecknock Society

<http://www.brecknocksociety.co.uk>



BRECKNOCK OVERSEAS

This is intended as an occasional series, featuring Brecknock connections further afield. Reader's contributions or suggestions gratefully received.

Adelaide in South Australia had a cluster of Brecknock names – the Brecknock Hotel, Brecknock Insurance, and an offshore gasfield, Brecknock Field. By sheer coincidence, it is also the home of Brecknock Consulting, a consultancy involved in developing public art, and run by Richard Brecknock, to whom we are indebted for this article. – Ed.

BRECKNOCK CONSULTING: OVER TWENTY YEARS OF FOSTERING CULTURE AND CREATIVITY IN AUSTRALIAN CITIES

On the other side of the globe from Brecon a small cultural planning and public art business, Brecknock Consulting, has carved out a significant niche for itself in Australia. The company, run by Richard Brecknock and his daughter Adey Brecknock, has offices in Adelaide, Melbourne and Brisbane and is widely acclaimed for delivering extremely high quality outcomes in public art and cultural planning.

Richard was a child of ten when his parents Howard and Alma Brecknock migrated to Australia, subsequently living in Melbourne, Sydney and Adelaide. While his brother, Peter, became an architect, Richard was destined for a life in the arts, first as a film maker, then as a sculptor and craftsman and finally as a consultant. In his film making phase Richard worked initially as an assistant director on TV commercials and then as a director on documentaries. This included making wild life, educational, business and government documentaries as well as short features for TV and theatre release.

Having studied sculpture at the National Art School in Sydney in the 1960s Richard gave up filmmaking to become a full time artist and had a very successful career as a professional visual artist with many exhibitions in prestigious galleries and a number of major architectural commissions across Australia.

It was his experience as an artist for public spaces that led to the establishment of Brecknock Consulting in 1988. Originally the consultancy was focused on providing architects and government clients with advice on commissioning artists and providing project management services, but as the demand grew the range of services also expanded to involve cultural planning and arts policy. Richard completed a Master of Arts in Cultural and Media Studies at Griffith University

which further expanded the professional services and aided the consultancy's expansion interstate.

In the late 1990s as other directors joined the company the business expanded into Brisbane, Sydney and finally Melbourne. Although the Sydney office closed after a few years the company, now with offices in Adelaide, Melbourne and Brisbane, is able to provide services to greater range of government and corporate sector clients across most of Australia and at times undertakes international projects.

Over the last ten years or so Richard has been working in association with COMEDIA an English "think tank" focused on culture and creativity in cities. COMEDIA established by Charles Landry have been an inspirational organisation working with cities around the world helping them to develop their potential as "Creative Cities". Most recently Richard worked with Charles and his colleague Phil Wood on the "Intercultural City", an international research project which explored the benefits of the growing cultural diversity in western cities. Richard undertook case studies in New Zealand, Australia and the London Borough of Lewisham and contributed to an international conference in Liverpool and the 2007 publication, *The Intercultural City: planning for diversity advantage*.

While increasingly Richard's consulting is focused on strategic planning with a cultural perspective for cities across Australia, Adey ensures the public art projects are effectively managed. She works with the company's curator to find the right artists for the project and then oversees the process involving the development of concepts, fabricating the artwork and finally the installation on site. Public art can be a very complex and difficult area as there are many competing interests associated with public space and art is always a contentious issue with people loving or hating the outcomes.

The Brecknock Consulting team have over the years had the opportunity to work on an incredibly wide range of interesting projects from major development projects where the public art budget is in the millions of dollars to small community health projects for Indigenous communities on islands in the Torres Strait between Australia and New Guinea.

One of the more complex projects was the public art for a new Magistrates Court building in Brisbane that involved fourteen different artists creating work for outside the building and throughout the internal public spaces. This project required a high level of co-ordination at every stage and resulted in a wonderful range of artworks including the entry sculpture by artist Daniel Tempelman that has become a Brisbane landmark. (Figure 1) Also in Brisbane the Brecknock Consulting team curated and project managed a public art program for a new town centre that involved commissioning artworks for the streetscape, plaza and a massive wall work by Aboriginal artist Joanne Currie. (Figure 2)

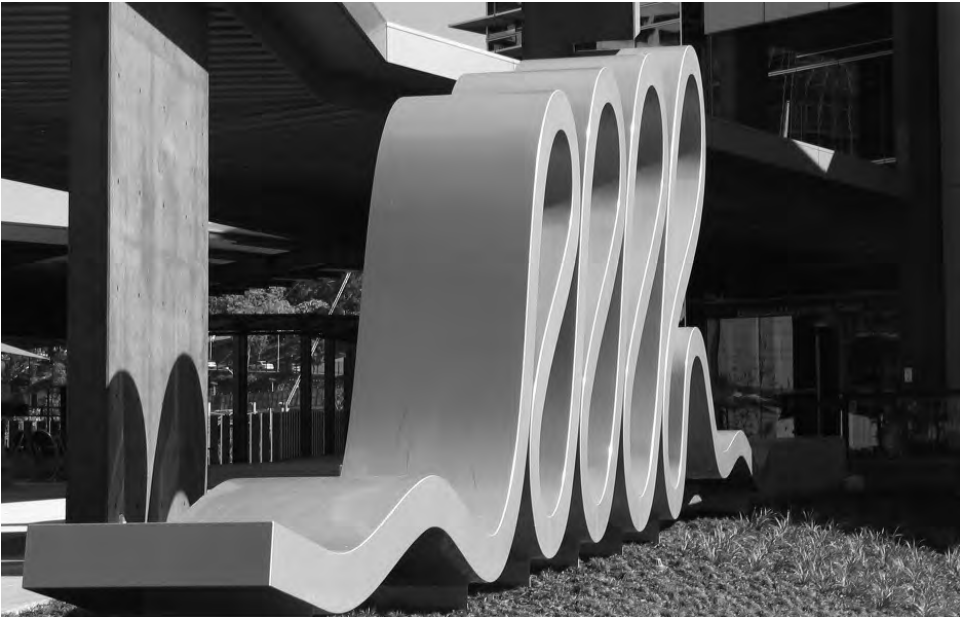


Figure 1 Sculpture by Daniel Tempelman at Brisbane.

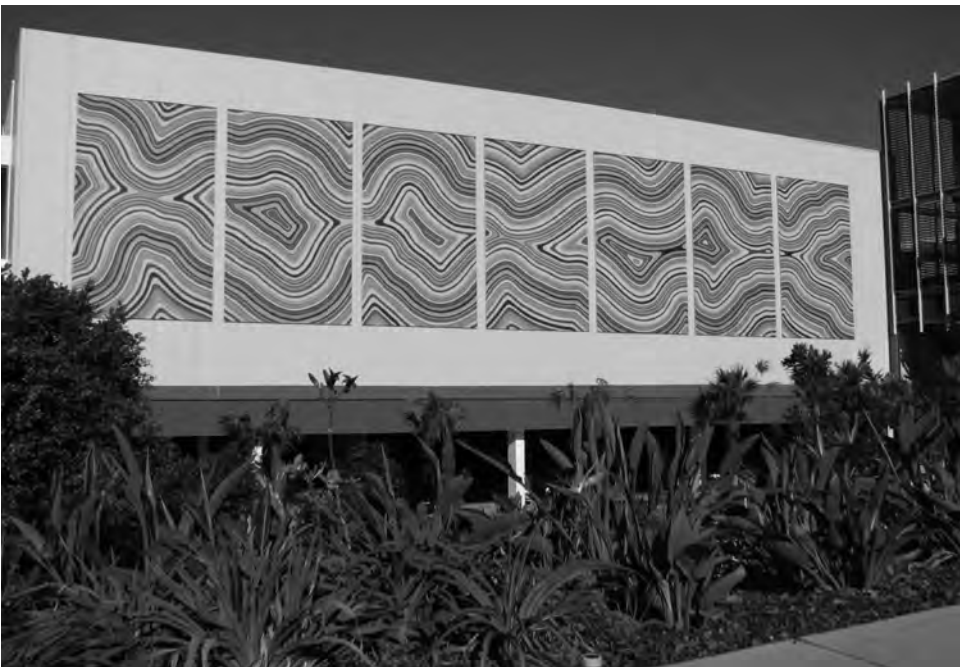


Figure 2 Wall work by Joanne Currie, Brisbane.

While permanent artworks such as these examples continue to be required by most of Brecknock Consulting's clients there is a growing interest in artworks that are utilizing new technologies such as computer generated digital media. In the last few years Brecknock Consulting has commissioned projection works, screen based concepts and most recently an installation in a park where a series of sculptural forms interact with the climate, respond to the people passing and through a computer program feedback the information through LED lighting displays.

For Brecknock Consulting it is important to keep abreast of the latest developments in the arts, the building industry and cultural policy for cities and governments, therefore research into current trends is ongoing. As a result Richard has travelled extensively and regularly attends conferences in Australia and overseas. He has been invited to speak at many international conferences in countries such as England, USA, Canada, Spain, Czech Republic, Denmark, Norway, Turkey, Japan and New Zealand.

With over twenty years of experience, an excellent reputation across all its consulting areas and a strong Australian economy it appears likely that the Brecknock name will continue to feature in the creative and cultural development of Australian cities.

RICHARD BRECKNOCK

ADOLYGIADAU/BOOK REVIEWS

Cymru Evan Jones – Detholiad o Bapurau Evan Jones, Tŷ'n y Pant, Llanwrtyd, Gol/Ed Herbert Hughes, Gwasg Gomer, 304 tud., £16.99, ISBN 978 1 84851 151 4

Fel ag a ddywed Herbert Hughes yn ei erthygl ar ei lyfr yn y gyfrol hon, gwahoddwyd ef gan Amgueddfa Werin Sain Ffagan i arolygu a threfnu'r cyfoeth o bapurau gan yr amaethwr Evan Jones yr oedd y teulu wedi eu trosglwyddo i'r Amgueddfa. Y canlyniad i'w waith trylwyr a dygn yw llyfr hyfryd dros ben sydd yn cofnodi nid yn unig bywyd cefn gwlad mewn cornel o'n sir ond hefyd arddywediadau, arferion amaethyddol a materion hanesyddol sydd yn wir am rannau helaeth o'r Gymru wledig. Mae llawer o agweddau ar y bywyd hwnnw wedi cilio o'r tir, ond erys rhai o'r disgrifiadau o fywyd bob dydd yng nghof llawer o bobl cefn gwlad o hyd. Ceir yma drysorfa o straeon a chofnodion o bob agwedd o fywyd a diddordebau'r dyn hynod o Lanwrtyd a fu'n dyst i arferion sydd bellach wedi diflannu o'r wlad yn ogystal â nodiadau a rhestrau manwl o fywyd beunyddiol ei ardal. Mae'n llyfr sydd yn ddiddorol ar bob tudalen ac yn haeddu ei le yn llyfrgell pawb sydd yn hoffi lloffa ymhlith trysorau'r gorffennol.

*A translation of the above is available on the website of the Brecknock Society
<http://www.brecknocksociety.co.uk>*

Look To! My Ringing World, Colin A Lewis, pub The Music Department, Rhodes University, Grahamstown, South Africa, 192 pages, ISBN 0 86810 434 5. This book is available in Wales from Malcolm Johns via the Brecknock Museum, £12

Unlike the small geographic compass of Colin's article on the Bells of the Archdeaconry of Hay in this issue of *Brycheiniog*, Colin Lewis's ringing world as recounted in his book spans a much wider canvass, including Wales, Ireland, England, South Africa, Zimbabwe, Mozambique and New Zealand, and, even though he may not have rung there, Russia, Kazakhstan and Argentina. A must for bellringers, to whom it is dedicated by a distinguished and widely experienced ringer, Colin Lewis's book encompasses more than just bells and belltowers, and offers his recollections and impressions of life in the various countries in which he has taught, worked, rung, ridden and hunted, and gives a very interesting personal view of the second half of the twentieth century, recounting his life and his experiences of the changing world in which we live.

Crickhowell through the eyes of the Tourist, 1780–1870, Robert Gant. Publisher: Crickhowell and District Archive Centre, 20 pages.

This booklet is a revised version of an earlier work by Robert Gant, formerly Deputy Head of the School of Earth Sciences and Geography at Kingston University, who has written articles for *Brycheiniog* on two occasions in the past. Well researched and illustrated, we are given a fascinating insight into the development of tourism in south east Breconshire. Tourists' impressions of the town varied greatly, and not all were as complimentary to this delightful little town as we might imagine. We can follow the development of the town and alterations and improvements to it over the years. This interesting little volume is available from the Crickhowell and District Archive Centre in Beaufort Street, Crickhowell.

The Mills of Grwyne, Raymond Hawkins. Publisher: Crickhowell and District Archive Centre, 26 pages.

This booklet is another valuable and useful publication by the Crickhowell and District Archive Centre. It is a reprint of articles submitted by Raymond Hawkins to the 'Museum News' column in the Brecon and Radnor Express between 1960 and 1970. Most readers would expect an account of the corn mills of the rural idyll of the Grwyne Valley to the north and east of Crickhowell, but many will be surprised to learn something of the industrial past of this corner of Brecknockshire: in addition to the corn and grist mills, the booklet gives accounts of woollen mills, iron works and paper and board mills, all powered by the waters of Afon Grwyne on its way from the Black Mountains to the Usk, waters which proved quite destructive on occasions, sweeping away the bridge on at least two occasions in its history. This booklet, available from the Resources Centre, is well researched and illustrated, and makes a valuable contribution to the history of the area.