

BRYCHEINIOG

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CYMDEITHAS BRYCHEINIOG A CHYFEILLION YR AMGUEDDFA
THE BRECKNOCK SOCIETY AND MUSEUM FRIENDS

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GOLYGYDDOL

Cafodd y Gymdeithas unwaith yn rhagor newidiadau sylweddol yn ei Swyddogion. Yn dilyn blynyddoedd lawer fel Ysgrifennydd Anrhydeddus, penderfynodd Miss Helen Gichard ymddeol adeg y Cyfarfod Blynyddol, gan roi gorchwyl bron yn amhosib i'r Gymdeithas, sef dod o hyd i rywun i gymryd ei lle. Mae Helen wedi bod yn addurn yn y swydd, yn aelod brwd ac ymroddedig, gan lunio bob blwyddyn raglen ddiddorol iawn o gyfarfodydd ac ymweliadau, yn ogystal â chadw cofnodion Cyngor y Gymdeithas. Mae hi wedi haeddu gwerthfawrogiad a dyled y Gymdeithas. Mae Mrs Gwyneth Evans a Mrs Elaine Starling wedi cytuno i rannu'r swydd o Ysgrifennydd Anrhydeddus rhyngddynt, a dymuna'r Gymdeithas bob llwyddiant iddynt yn eu hymdrechion.

Bu Mrs Susan Fawcett-Gandy yn Ysgrifennydd Aelodaeth ers nifer o flynyddoedd, ond yn teimlo bellach ei bod am ymddeol o'r swydd. Mae'r Gymdeithas yn ffodus iawn bod Dr. Elizabeth Siberry wedi gwirfoddoli i gymryd y swydd bwysig hon drosodd, ac rydym yn ddiolchgar i Mrs Fawcett-Gandy am ei holl waith dros y flynyddoedd, ac am iddi gynnig o'i gwirfodd i helpu'r Ysgrifennydd newydd yn y cyfnod o drosglwyddo'r awennau.

Bydd adeilad yr Amgueddfa ar gau erbyn inni fynd i'r wasg a nes y byddwn yn gwybod manylion llawn yr arian a ddisgwyllir gan Gronfa Treftadaeth y Loteri, bydd dyddiad yr ail-agor yn anhysbys. Mae'n bwysig i ni fel Cymdeithas gadw ein hamlygedd gyda'r cyhoedd yn ystod y cyfnod, a bod yn barod i ail-gymryd yr awennau pan fydd yr adeilad, ar ba ffurf bynnag, yn ail-agor ei drysau.

Bu sefydlu grwpiau diddordebau arbennig yn ddatblygiad gwefreiddiol yn hanes y Gymdeithas, y cyntaf yn symud ymlaen gydag ad-argraffiad yr erthyglau gwreiddiol ar Dai Brycheiniog gan S. R. Jones a J. T. Smith, a ymddangosodd yn wreiddiol yng nghyfrolau *Brycheiniog* X i XIII rhwng 1963 a 1970. Mae'r rhifynnau hynny allan o brint ers amser maith, ond maent yn dal yn uchel mewn ymgeisiadau am gopïau. Mae'r awduron, bellach yn eu hwyth-degau, wedi mynychu cyfarfod i drafod y posibiladau, a bydd Cymdeithas Brycheiniog yn cyd-weithio â'r Comisiwn Brenhinol ar Hynafion Cymru i lunio cyfrol anrhydeddus a fydd yn ail-gyhoeddi rhannau o'r gwaith gwreiddiol, gan ychwanegu defnyddiau a lluniau newydd o'r tai a astudiwyd.

Sefydlwyd grŵp arall i astudio enwau lleoedd Brycheiniog, i gyd-weithio â Chymdeithas Enwau Lleoedd Cymru sydd newydd ei ffurfio. Dylai aelodau a darllenwyr sydd â diddordeb yn hyn o beth gysylltu â'r Golygydd neu Swyddogion y Gymdeithas am fwy o wybodaeth.

BRYNACH PARRI

EDITORIAL

Once again the Society has witnessed a change in Officers. After many years as Honorary Secretary, Miss Helen Gichard decided to step down at the last AGM, and the Society was faced with the seemingly impossible task of replacing the irreplaceable. Helen had filled the office with great enthusiasm and dedication, producing a very interesting and varied programme of regular talks and visits each year, as well as acting as minutes secretary, and she has rightly earned the appreciation of the Society. Mrs Gwyneth Evans and Mrs Elaine Starling have agreed to share the post of Honorary Secretary between them, and the Society wishes them every success in their endeavours.

Mrs Susan Fawcett-Gandy has been Membership Secretary for many years, but feels she wishes to step down. We are fortunate to have obtained the services of Dr. Elizabeth Siberry to take over this important post, and are grateful to Mrs Fawcett-Gandy for all her work in past years, and for graciously agreeing to fully assist Dr Siberry in the handover.

The Museum building will be closed by the time of going to press, and, until we know the full details of the monies from the Lottery Heritage Fund, the exact date of re-opening will remain unknown. It is important to the Society that we remain in the public eye during the period of closure, and are ready to take up the reins again when the building, in whatever final form, re-opens.

An exciting development has been the establishment of an interest group to consider the re-publication of the original Smith and Jones articles on the Houses of Brecknockshire that appeared in volumes IX to XIII of *Brycheiniog* between 1963 and 1970, and which, long out of print, have always been the most sought-after past issues of this journal. The original authors, now both in their eighties, have attended a meeting to discuss the possibilities, and the Brecknock Society will be working in conjunction with the Royal Commission on Ancient and Historical Monuments in Wales to produce a volume of distinction which will re-issue some of the work, and enhance it with new information and images of the houses originally studied.

A further interest group has been set up to study the place names of Brecknockshire, to work in collaboration with the newly established Cymdeithas Enwau Lleoedd Cymru/The Welsh Place Names Society. Members and readers interested in this activity should contact the Editor or other Officers of the Society for further information.

BRYNACH PARRI

CYFRANNWYR/CONTRIBUTORS

R. F. Peter Powell is a long-standing member and enthusiastic supporter of the Society and has served as President (1984–1993), Treasurer (1994–2004) and as Assistant Editor of this Journal (1992–2000). He is a mathematician, and a widely recognized toponymist, and has contributed greatly to this, and other historical Journals.

Pamela Redwood has, over a period of twenty five years, researched the history of the Crickhowell area and the wider field of Welsh history, and has been a valued contributor to this Journal. She was instrumental in the establishment of the Crickhowell Resources and Information Centre, in which she still plays a prominent rôle.

Michael Jones is a History graduate from Cambridge University (1967) but spent his working life as an accountant – the last twenty years being with the NHS in Powys. In retirement, he runs a smallholding with his wife and raises funds for Usk House. His interest in local history lies particularly in those aspects of the past that can too easily be forgotten.

Richard Moore-Colyer is Emeritus Professor of Agrarian History in the University of Aberystwyth. He is the author of six books and numerous articles concerned with the social, agricultural and cultural history of England and Wales predominantly in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Current interests include the social and economic history of the horse and the early history of the organic movement and its links to ultra-Right political groupings.

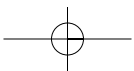
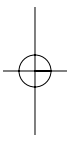
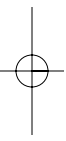
Margaret A. V. Gill – Dr Gill began her career with a fellowship in Mediterranean Archaeology and ended as Curator of Tunbridge Wells Museum & Art Gallery. She has written on a variety of subjects including Newcastle Goldsmiths and Tunbridge Ware. Since retiring to Glasbury, she has been interested in local history and botany, publishing articles on ceramic tiles in Radnorshire churches, the history of the parish churches in the Wye Valley Group, and wildflowers in the churchyards at Glasbury and Hay.

Abigail Kenvyn is the Assistant Curator at Brecknock Museum & Art Gallery. She graduated from the University of Liverpool with an Honours Degree in Ancient History and Archaeology. Before working in Brecon, she worked for National Museum of Wales at the National Roman Legion Museum in Caerleon.

Dr William Linnard was formerly Assistant Keeper at the National Museum of Wales (St Fagans), and honorary lecturer at the Department of Forestry, UCNW Bangor. A native of Neath, he was until recently the Chairman of the Wales & Marches Horological Society, and is a Freeman of the Worshipful Company of

Clockmakers. Over the years he has published extensively on various aspects of Welsh history, especially horology. His most recent books are *Welsh Woods & Forests: A History* (Gomer, 2000), and *Wales: Clocks & Clockmakers* (Mayfield, 2003).

E. D. Evans is a graduate of Aberystwyth, and taught History and Welsh Studies at Barry and Cardiff Colleges of Education and was a Tutor at the Open University for twenty years. He is the author of a *History of Wales, 1660–1815* (U.W.P.) and has contributed to *Brycheiniog* and other historical journals.



ADRODDIADAU/REPORTS

BRECKNOCK MUSEUM & ART GALLERY REPORT 2011

Brecknock Museum & Art Gallery has enjoyed another successful year, culminating in the temporary closure of the Museum on 31st October in preparation for major building works, due to commence early in 2012.

Early in the spring of 2011, we received the wonderful news that our Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) application had gained a first round pass and along side it a £141,200 development grant. The grant will enable the Museum to develop the second round application, during the next year. We are seeking £1.9m in funding from the HLF, in addition to those funds identified by Powys County Council, in order to complete the Connecting Communities and Collections project at Brecknock Museum. The first round pass is a major step forward for the Museum and it gives us a real opportunity to restore the old shire hall, bring the displays up to modern standards and allow the public better access to the collections.

During the last year, with financial support from the Brecknock Society & Museum Friends, the Museum purchased five Archaeological Treasure items, saving these artefacts for the people of Brecknock. The objects, a Roman silver pin head and four Roman Silver Coins, will join the larger collection of Roman metal detector finds donated to the Museum last year from around the Brecon Gaer site. The landowner, Mr Eric Jones, kindly donated his half of the treasure items and therefore reduced the purchase price by 50%.

The Archaeological collection was further expanded by the gifting of a hoard, consisting of two late Bronze Age axes of South Wales type, from a location near Llangynidr. We were very grateful to both the finder and the landowner for this act of generosity.

During 2011, the Brecknock Museum collection expanded by over 1500 items, and included, archaeological objects, artworks, photographic slides and a number of social history items. We were particularly grateful to the Contemporary Art Society for Wales for their gift of ten pieces of contemporary art. The works have made a significant contribution to developing the already fine collection.

During the past year Brecknock Museum has created a number of successful and broad ranging exhibitions. An expansive retrospective of the work of Sam Garratt opened the year, followed by a touring exhibition, from Amgueddfa Cymru – National Museum Wales, of Dinosaurs in your Garden. During the early summer we looked at the work of artist Meg Stevens and her study of Waun-y-Mynach Common, whilst working very closely with the Brecknock Wildlife Trust and the Biodiversity Information Service (BIS), to create an associated display in the Naturalists Study.

The Bog/Mawnog project, led by Pip Woolf, saw 6 artists produce new work in response to an area of eroding peat, on Pen Trumau in the Brecon Beacons National Park. The work was funded by the Arts Council of Wales and the opening night saw a performance by local poet Chris Meredith.

During the current closed period the staff of Brecknock Museum are busy packing objects and dismantling displays in readiness for the new roof and forward gallery. We are also developing our volunteer capabilities and are inviting the local community to get involved. If you are interested in helping Brecknock Museum please do get in touch.

The Brecknock Society and Museum Friends are fundamental to the development and continuing growth of Brecknock Museum & Art Gallery; many thanks for your support.

NIGEL BLACKAMORE MPhil
Senior Curator
Brecknock Museum & Art Gallery

ARCHIFAU POWYS ARCHIVES

Powys Archives continues to operate a very popular public service, and has attracted over 1,200 visitors this year. Around 1,500 original items were viewed from our collections, ranging from council minute books, workhouse records and Ordnance Survey maps. The resources available in the searchroom, including local history publications, census returns and free access to the websites Ancestry and FindMyPast, have also been extremely well utilised. Our research service, operated for those unable to come in person, has generated around 200 hours of research, and around 800 additional letters and emails have been answered by staff about the records we hold. Powys Archives webpages on the County Council website have been accessed around 90,000 times and continue to be one of the Council's most popular online services.

Tudfil Adams, County Librarian, retired at the end of March. Tudfil had been with Powys County Council from June 1993, and the Library and Archive Service enjoyed a long and productive partnership under her direction. Louise Ingham, Arts and Culture Manager has now taken over responsibility for the two services. Dawn Gill, Archives Assistant, retired at the end of May. Dawn worked for Powys Archives for nearly seven years and was a great asset to the team, and made a huge contribution to the popularity of the service. Stacey Kennedy becomes our new Archives Assistant and took up post at the beginning of June. Stacey lives in Llandrindod Wells with her husband and young son, and has previously undertaken volunteer work for Powys Archives. She has a genuine interest in archives and local history, and plans to qualify as an archivist.

On 7 March Nick Kingsley, Head of Archives Sector Development at the National Archives (TNA) undertook a formal inspection of Powys Archives. TNA has a statutory role to help monitor and raise standards of archival provision, with particular reference to governance, storage facilities, documentation and access arrangements. In addition to this, in July, Powys Archives received a visit from Oliver Morley, Chief Executive of TNA and Linda Tomos, Director of CyMAL (Museums, Archives and Libraries Wales).

In last year's Brycheiniog details were given about an early register for the parish of Llandeilo Graban, Radnorshire that had been received by Powys Archives. It contains baptisms, marriages and burials that would have taken place at the parish church from 1669–1812. The register was thought to be lost and it was last seen in 1935, but having turned up unexpectedly in the Midlands it is now in the safekeeping of the Archives. The volume came to Powys Archives in an extremely poor condition, so poor in fact that any attempt to use the register, or to digitise it, would have resulted in significant further damage. A grant of £3,980 was therefore awarded by CyMAL to conserve the Llandeilo Graban parish register and to prevent further deterioration. The aim is now to digitise the volume and make the digital images available for public use. This is

the latest in a series of conservation grants awarded to Powys Archives by external bodies. Since 2009 the service has benefited from nearly £25,000 of funding specifically for conservation work.

Details of accessions received during 2011 with particular reference to Breconshire are as follows:

Public and Official Records

Coelbren School, Breconshire: including log books (2) 1966–1989, 1989–2002; attendance registers (51) 1990–2010; and a Governors' minute book 1975–1986 [Acc 2056]

Ysgol Maesydderwen, Ystradgynlais: admission registers 1979–1993 and 1993–2002; school leavers register 1986–1996; appointment book 1983–1991; Maesydderwen School Feasibility Study 1996; various school photographs 1947–2006 [Acc 2022]

Theatr Powys 1972–2011: including promotional material (fliers, posters and programmes) and photographs relating to Theatr Powys and Mid Powys Youth Theatre productions; press cuttings; and visitor comment books [Acc 2033]

Crickhowell War Memorial Hospital, Breconshire, 1938–1966, including ward report books (4) 1964–1966; admission and discharge registers (2) 1951–1957; admission and discharge register (maternity department) 1955–1959; drugs registers (3) 1938, 1958–1966; and midwives' registers of cases (10) 1938–1957, 1960–1961 [Acc 2039]

Bundle of papers relating to Vaynor and Penderyn Rural District Council, Breconshire, including an agenda of committee meetings to be held 27 Mar 1958 with accompanying report on rate estimates; housing applications for Pontneathvaughan and Hirwaun districts c1952; and Regulations and Standing Orders of the Council 1934 and 1967. Also papers relating to the Brecon and Radnor Constituency Labour Party, including a memorandum of the Executive Committee regarding the allocation of Speakers to the Division 1952. [Acc 2057]

Llanwrtyd Wells Town Council, Breconshire, including signed minutes 2003–September 2009; and agendas 2002–2005 [with gaps] [Acc 2066]

Non Official Records

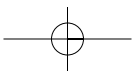
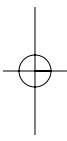
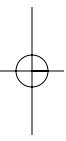
Small estate plan of Tyn y Llwyn and Cae Cradoc in the parish of Llanfrynach, Breconshire, 1825 [Acc 2015]

Photograph of the Brecon Parish Young Men's Bible Class 1922–1923 [Acc 2017]

Various maps: Land Utilisation Survey maps from 1930s (Brecon, Llandrindod Wells and Kington); Agricultural Land Classification map (Builth Wells and Brecon) 1967; various 25" and 6" OS maps [Acc 2023]

- Personal papers of Mrs Mair McLellan, a local author from Coelbren, Breconshire: including drafts, notes, journals and diaries 1950s–1980s. [Acc 2032, 2050]
- Three photographs relating to Sennybridge, Breconshire, including Sennybank, early 1900s; Defynnog Church, nr Sennybridge, c1927; and Sennybridge Show 100th Anniversary dinner, 1965 [Acc 2047]
- Photograph of Old Hemley Hall, Llanfihangel Tal y Llyn, Breconshire, 20th century [Acc 2052]
- Papers of the Reverend Evan Evans, minister at the Calvinistic Methodist chapel at Cefn Gorwydd, Breconshire, including notebooks (4) outlining his sermons, and a mounted photograph of the Reverend c1896–1932 [all in Welsh] [Acc 2054]
- Specification of work to Sardis Congregational Chapel, Ystradgynlais, Breconshire, May 1962 [Acc 2064]

CATHERINE RICHARDS



A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE FORMER GLAMORGAN STREET ENGLISH CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH, BRECON, AND THE SUBSEQUENT USE OF ITS CHAPEL AS A MUSEUM

Early in the 1830s, an English Congregationalist Minister from London, Rev. David Blow, visited Brecon and found no English speaking church of his denomination in the town. As a result, in 1833 he moved and purchased a house in St Mary's Street (now the Conservative Club) and began English services in a room licensed for the purpose, the Cause being recognised on 11 August 1833. Soon the need for a purpose-built meeting place became evident, and Blow gave part of his garden, bordering on Glamorgan Street, for the erection of a chapel. By 1836 the building, seating 350, was completed and in use. Three years later, Blow sold his house (at a loss) for it to be established as a residential theological college, the forerunner of the Memorial College on Camden Road. He remained Minister to the chapel until 1843 when he moved to Monmouth. His successor, Professor Henry Griffiths, for six years combined his ministry with a post as theological tutor at the college.

The few records available suggest the early Church had a good beginning. The Religious Census 1851 gives attendance figures of 130 for the morning service and 150 for the evening. From the start a Sunday School was held, and the controversial Government Report of 1846 (the Blue Books) records it as 'about the best conducted in the County'. Later, Edwin Poole (1850–1895), historian and publisher, was its Sunday School Superintendent and Church Secretary. The first Band of Hope in Brecon was formed at the chapel. In 1849, another Henry Griffiths, a student of his namesake, became pastor and served for twenty-five years. He was followed by Edmund Goodison from 1875 to 1878, and thereafter G. W. Cowper-Smith served until 1881. During the latter's ministry the chapel was renovated at a cost of £400 and it is likely that today's façade results from this work.

The last decades of the century saw three short pastorates: B. L. Thomas (1882–86); Melchizedeck Evans (1888–89); A. R. Ezard (1891–93), followed by John Evans. Between 1894 and 1905, in addition to his Church work, including another renovation, Evans combined his ministry with service at the new Memorial College in Camden Road, which had replaced the earlier college in 1869 and in the local Congregational Association. At the turn of the century, the Glamorgan Street Chapel had 80 members and 75 scholars. His successor, from 1907 until 1916, T. Gwyn Thomas, was to be its last minister.

Until the end of the 19th century, the other Brecon Congregational Church, the Plough, had held its services in Welsh, but by 1920 many activities were conducted in English; the specific function of the Glamorgan Street as the English place of worship was therefore less obvious. Talks were begun in the early 1920s, when both churches were without a minister, and eventually the two congregations agreed to unite. The union service was held on 4th March 1923, when 43 members of the Glamorgan Street Church joined the Plough United Congregational Church giving

a total membership of 288. Shortly after, memorials and other artefacts were moved to the Plough and today can be seen in the vestry. After the sale of the redundant chapel, part of the proceeds went to purchase the hall of the Roath Park Congregational Chapel, Cardiff, which was installed in 1927 at the rear of the Plough where it remained until the 1960s.

The sale of the Glamorgan Street Chapel was completed on 1st December 1925, ownership passing to John Price of Morgannwg House (opposite the Chapel). Its use, if any, in the next few years is not known, but when the Brecknock Society was formed in 1927, with its intention to start a museum, it is likely that the Society acquired a lease on the redundant chapel. Of this, there is no direct evidence. Lord Buckland, the first President of the Society, donated a large sum to convert the building, and the museum opened in March 1928. The first curator was P. J. Mountney but he left in the first year because the Society could not afford his salary. This set-back hindered the progress and development of the Museum. Without established systems for cataloguing and display, material accumulated haphazardly. Wartime conditions added to problems, but on 23rd December 1943 the Society purchased the building.

Sir John Lloyd, a County Councillor, who acted as honorary curator at the time, realised that the Museum would best succeed if made the responsibility of the County Council. Consequently, on 1st October 1950, the Council embarked on a 999 year lease at an annual rent of £1. A generous grant from the Carnegie Trust and support from the National Museum of Wales brought long overdue reorganisation and refurbishment, leading to the Museums' re-opening on 18th April 1961, appropriately by Lady Lloyd, the widow of Sir John.

With no provision for a full-time curator, the Rev J. Jones-Davies undertook the curatorial rôle on a voluntary basis, helped by Society members and the expertise of staff at the National and Folk Museums of Wales. As the years passed, more exhibits were donated and acquired, and shortage of space meant museum storage was extended to four other sites in the town. Several schemes, including an extension to the former chapel, and a purpose-built museum, were considered, but came to nothing.

Early in the 1970s, local government in Wales was reorganised so that Brecknockshire became a part of the new Powys County Council, with headquarters in Llandrindod. The Shire Hall, at the head of Glamorgan Street, was vacated. This building, including its Assize Court, was converted to become the 'new' Museum, with a full-time curator, a technician and staff. On 28th March 1974, the Rev J. Jones-Davies (as was most fitting) ceremoniously opened the newly sited Brecknock Museum.

The 'Old' Museum, as it became known, continued as a museum store with workshops for artists and craftsmen, but early this century had to be abandoned because of structural defects. In 2010 the County Council surrendered its lease on the building. It was then sold by the Brecknock Society & Museum Friends to a

A brief history of the former Glamorgan Street English Congregational Church, Brecon 17

private individual for conversion to a centre for artistic and community use. The proceeds of the sale were ear-marked for the Brecknock Museum & Art Gallery's use, for its development and for specific projects as agreed with the Brecknock Society & Museum Friends.

R. F. PETER POWELL

Notes

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

In 17th century Brecknockshire, some Religious Dissenters were Congregationalists in belief and practice. Later, the resulting 'Gathered Churches', if Welsh speaking, became known as Independent (Annibynnol); the English speaking were more often known as Congregational. Both terms are applied to the Glamorgan Street Church in its time.

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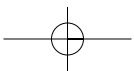
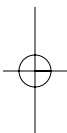
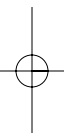
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HOUSES AND HISTORY IN RURAL BRECONSHIRE 1600–1800

Introduction

In 1959 Breconshire Education Committee invited two young architectural historians, John (J.T.) Smith and Stanley (S.R.) Jones, to give a refresher course for teachers on 'Looking at Buildings'. The result, astonishingly, was a series of studies of vernacular houses in the county that took more than ten years to complete. Interest in Welsh vernacular architecture had been growing since the published work of two pioneers in the subject, Iorwerth Peate and Sir Cyril Fox, but the Breconshire research was the first to involve a local community. It was a major and an original venture, requiring the active collaboration of local historians, teachers, householders, photographers and vehicle drivers. Fieldwork took place in school holidays, and the choice of 'Jones and Smith' to examine and record the architecture proved a very happy one, introducing the people of Breconshire to more old houses than most of them knew they had.

The first part of this article recalls how this great piece of work came about, followed by a brief outline of Jones and Smith's work and the insights it provided. It is also a tribute to their dedication over so long a period. The results were published in seven instalments in *Brycheiniog*, corresponding to the seven Educational Districts in the county, over the years 1963 to 1972. The second part of this present article, 'After Jones and Smith', attempts to link the architecture, as indicated by the house plans, to the wealth and social circumstances of the early builders. (It is notable that the seventeenth century, the earliest building date for most of the houses, was a time of increasing prosperity nationally.) Observation of the immediate surroundings of houses – outbuildings, land, geography and climate, as well as what is known of the families who occupied them – can bring life and a wider interest to a house plan. Unfortunately documentary evidence for seventeenth century Breconshire is scarce, but 'case studies' have been included here that show that more can be discovered than is at first apparent. It is hoped that people will be encouraged to look, or look again, at these historical treasures in the countryside.

The 'Long Pilgrimage'

The study of vernacular buildings in Wales dates from comparatively recent times. Houses in the countryside, usually small and functional, were not thought of as worthy of record. In the early twentieth century abandoned farmsteads, smallholdings and cottages were to be found in many parts of the country, as inefficient farming methods and an expanding population forced their occupants to migrate to industrial areas in search of a living. Their dwellings were forgotten, farmlands returned to waste or were taken over by neighbours, and in some areas houses were demolished, to be replaced by industrial buildings or modern suburban housing. Of course many houses survived, but ruin or survival, all were remnants of a huge slice of rural life in Wales – an overwhelmingly rural country – of which almost nothing was known.

Fortunately this state of affairs did not go entirely unnoticed. A few notable men, individually or as leaders of others, embarked on searches for old houses in rural Wales. They were archaeologists, historians and lovers of the countryside, familiar with the architecture of greater buildings but attracted by the workmanship – or perhaps the survival – of humbler dwellings, built by local people on the land they farmed. Who had built these houses? Why had some been abandoned while others were enlarged and refurbished, with the older parts concealed behind a Victorian frontage? Were they not as much part of the country's heritage as the grand estates?

In 1887 Dafydd Peate of Llanbrynmair, Montgomeryshire, made a list of some 106 houses in his area which had become derelict within his memory. The Peate family had long been established in their local community as carpenters and farmers, but now there was good reason for concern: census returns for 1881 showed that while the population of Wales had risen in the towns during the previous decade, in rural areas it had dropped, Montgomeryshire losing nearly twelve per cent of its inhabitants.¹ As the farms disappeared so did the community's way of life, its social links, customs and traditional skills. Yet the twentieth century was to bring hope in a way unimaginable to earlier generations. Dafydd's son George, a carpenter and contractor with expert knowledge of rural building and the Welsh countryside, passed his knowledge and enthusiasm on to his son Iorwerth, born in 1901. At the outbreak of war in 1914 Iorwerth Peate was at Machynlleth County School, moving on to university at Aberystwyth, obtaining degrees in history and in geography. He was one of the first students to follow a post-graduate course in Celtic archaeology there, and after time spent writing and lecturing, he was appointed Assistant in the Archaeology Department at the National Museum of Wales in 1927, at the age of twenty-six.

At the museum Peate was put in charge of the artefacts collectively known as 'bygones', which he envisaged as the nucleus of a collection demonstrating the Welsh way of life. A prolific writer of prose and poetry in his native language, Peate turned to English to produce a succession of museum guides. He also undertook a field survey of rural building in the countryside, spending weekends and sacrificing annual holidays for twelve years to the task of wandering through the thirteen counties of Wales in search of houses to describe. All too often his mission was fruitless: some houses he looked for – armed with photographs taken by others – had disappeared or been replaced by new building. But he persisted in what he called his 'long pilgrimage', its first part being detailed surveying of the buildings he did find and the second part an exhaustive study of references in Welsh literary and manuscript sources.

In the course of this work Peate puts forward a definition of the Welsh vernacular house, remarkable for the simplicity and imaginative insight with which he describes the basic needs for survival of the Welsh peasant in earlier times. 'Social, climatic and geographical conditions all combine to produce an architecture in which fashion or style play little or no part. The primitive need for shelter from the

sun and rain induces the peasant folk to build shelter for themselves and their cattle. There are no architects. The peasant knows his wants . . . with his meagre resources he builds as simply as possible in the local materials available . . . the Welsh house, be it farmhouse or cottage, is therefore an expression of Welsh life . . . the folk dwelling varies according to the climatic and geographical conditions of the locality in which it is found *and also according to the social condition of its occupier or builder and his economic status*.² Peate identified four house-types: circular (prehistoric huts), rectangular (long-houses), rectangular (cottages), stone and half-timbered houses. The type that caught and has retained the popular imagination is the ‘moorland longhouse’ described by Peate as of great antiquity and with a wide distribution in Wales. Constructed to meet the needs of man and animals in windswept moorland, where easy access to cattle was essential, it was a long, low building divided into two parts, the dwelling house at the upper end, separated by a covered passage from the byre at the lower end.

The results of Peate’s labours were published as *The Welsh House* in 1940. The book was an immediate success and proved a seminal work. The quest for vernacular houses continued, initiative passing to the museum’s director Cyril (later Sir Cyril) Fox. Twenty years older than Peate, Fox had been an outstanding student at Cambridge University, where he published a Ph.D. in 1921 on the archaeology of the Cambridge region – after which he was poached (it is hinted) by Mortimer Wheeler to join the National Museum of Wales, succeeding the latter as its Director in 1926. His influential book, *The Personality of Britain*,³ describes Britain in prehistoric times in terms of a geographical division of the country into Highland and Lowland Zones, each division influencing the life of prehistoric man, as revealed by the many archaeological sites and artefacts that Fox discovered and studied. His view was that Lowland Britain was easily overrun by invaders, and there a new culture of continental origin tended to be *imposed*. In the Highland Zone on the other hand the alien culture tended to be *absorbed* by the existing upland culture. There was greater *unity* of culture in the Lowland Zone, but greater *continuity* of culture in the Highland Zone. Throughout his long and active career at the National Museum of Wales the scope and variety of Fox’s archaeological work had an immense influence on his contemporaries.⁴ His interest in houses was aroused by a visit to an out-door museum in Sweden in 1930, which inspired him to press for the establishment of such a museum in Wales displaying examples of vernacular buildings. The idea had earlier been discussed by others and had long been Peate’s dream. As a start a Department of Folk Culture was created at the National Museum in 1934, with Peate as its curator.

The 1930s were difficult years for a museum with ambitions to preserve or at least record the Welsh way of life as expressed by the houses they built. The threat of war brought significant change when the government took over sites in Wales and evicted the inhabitants to make way for military purposes. Fox got permission to examine cottages on an extensive stretch of land near the Pembrokeshire coast

acquired by the Admiralty for such a purpose. He recorded them in great detail, explaining that although they were of a widespread and well-known regional type, there was an urgent need for such cottages to be well recorded as 'a basis for a scientific study of the social anthropology of Britain'.⁵ He thought that at least one of these cottages ought to have been part of a series of primitive dwellings of Wales in a National Open-air Museum. In the summer of 1940 Peate had the harrowing experience of being sent by the museum to research, measure and photograph fifty-four homesteads that were being evacuated at short notice to make way for military training on Mynydd Epynt and Bwlch-y-groes.⁶ The despair of the last remaining inhabitants – about to leave a community perhaps not unlike his own – caused him great distress, not mitigated by the knowledge that some record was being made.

Times of economic and social disruption, including war, have prompted great efforts to preserve a country's heritage, previously taken for granted, for future generations. In 1941 Fox embarked on an ambitious study of farmhouse architecture in Monmouthshire.⁷ The study was to take him seven years. The idea had occurred to him while recording a small farmhouse near Usk before it was demolished to make way for a 'war factory'. From the outside the building may have looked plain and uninteresting, with thick, whitewashed walls and tiny, irregular windows, but to Fox it exemplified a style – stone-walled, with oak doorways and unglazed oak-framed windows – about which he wanted to know more. His study differed from Peate's in that it concentrated on one particular area, the central lowlands of Monmouthshire, a prosperous agricultural district with a sunny mild climate, geographically homogeneous and illustrative of his theory of a Lowland Zone. Assisted by Lord Raglan, whose archaeological knowledge and ready entrance into the selected houses were invaluable, he recorded 470 houses, situated up to the 600 ft. contour (183 m.). Whereas Peate had not assigned dates to the buildings he recorded, Fox divided his findings into three periods of time: medieval, sub-medieval (i.e. post-medieval but retaining medieval elements) and Renaissance. The medieval period (circa 1415–1560) was devoted to wooden buildings, sufficient examples surviving to be worth study (almost none have survived in Breconshire). The sub-medieval period, which Fox defined architecturally as circa 1550–1610, was much richer in surviving vernacular architecture, now stone-built, making possible the study of several hundred farmhouses. The reason for the change was growing prosperity, country-wide, from that time, in an era of peace and relative stability after centuries of conflict and pestilence in medieval times. Farmers in the Monmouthshire lowlands (followed a few decades later by farmers in Breconshire) used their greater wealth to build larger and more comfortable homes. A two-storey house in stone replaced the single-storey wooden building that had served in the past. A substantial stone fireplace and chimney replaced the open fire on the floor with smoke drifting out through a hole in the roof. Fox saw in this period the emergence of a Regional Style. It merged into what Fox called the English Renaissance (1590s–1714),

architecturally much more complex, characterised by changes in structural and ornamental detail – the latter becoming richer and more elaborate.

The appearance of English Renaissance features in rural Monmouthshire was a disappointment to Fox and Raglan. They marked the beginning of the end of the Regional Style, ‘whose peculiar character had arisen from the inherited way of life on the land of its creators’.⁸ The architectural historian Peter Smith described the almost awesome pleasure of seeing these houses. He recalled ‘an unforgettable farmhouse interior behind those rough and often unprepossessing walls: heavy, dark, richly-carved oak ceiling beams glinting here and there as mouldings catch the light, the substantial wooden partitions and extraordinary massive wooden door frames, all giving the impression of substance and weight, of being built by craftsmen larger than life . . .’ Like almost everyone who has visited and admired an old house he added that there was no complete substitute for experiencing a building directly. ‘No verbal description, drawing or photograph can ever be a complete alternative to seeing a monument in the round’.⁹

By the time Fox and Raglan’s work on Monmouthshire houses was published the dream of an open-air folk museum for Wales had at last become reality. In March 1946 the Earl of Plymouth had offered St. Fagans Castle, with its gardens and grounds, to the National Museum of Wales as a centre for a Folk Museum, with eighty acres of adjacent land. The Museum of Folk Life was opened to the public in 1948, presided over by its curator, Iorwerth Peate, who had just published his third volume of poetry. In a guide to the new Museum Peate wrote that it ‘represents the life and culture of a nation, illustrating the arts and crafts of the complete community . . . the environment of the national life is presented in the open-air section . . . suitable houses of various dates and character, condemned to destruction for a variety of reasons, are rebuilt on the site’. One of the first acquisitions was Cilewent, a longhouse from Radnorshire. By 1967 the exhibits included a timber-framed barn from Flintshire, the Esgair Moel woollen factory from Breconshire, a timber-framed house set on stone sills in Montgomeryshire, a chapel from Carmarthenshire, a cottage from Caernarfonshire and a gypsy caravan.¹⁰

Vernacular Architecture in Breconshire

After the Second World War economic reconstruction in Wales was accompanied by a renewed appreciation of the Welsh national heritage, in all its aspects. History, national and local, was pursued with enthusiasm. In the words of Kenneth Morgan, founder of the *The Welsh History Review* in 1960, ‘perhaps the abiding theme of post-war Welsh society was the preservation and definition of its Welshness and traditional culture’.¹¹

In this atmosphere a new generation of vernacular architecture pilgrims took to the road. Hitherto the search for houses had been carried out by archaeologists from the National Museum, with all the advantages that conferred. The new

impetus came from a different source – the county of Breconshire.¹² Interest in local history had already been stimulated in the 1920s, when men returning from the First World War noticed – as if for the first time – that their familiar landscape was strewn not with bodies but with older evidences of the heritage they might have lost. Mortimer Wheeler (then Director of the National Museum of Wales) caused a stir when he proposed to excavate Brecon Gaer; a thousand-year-old canoe was lifted from Llangorse lake by a local farmer and analysed by Cyril Fox himself. Local people looked in their attics, gardens and fields, and discovered forgotten treasures, large and small. The man who drew together all these strands of interest was Colonel John (later Sir John) Conway Lloyd. A member of a long-established and distinguished county family, he returned from the war with a Military Cross and devoted the rest of his life to his county, playing an important part in local government, where he had a particular interest in education. He was a landowner intensely interested in archaeology, and a practical and untiring campaigner. It was due mainly to his personality and drive that between the years 1924 and 1928 there emerged a Brecknock Society ‘to take and encourage amongst the people of Brecknock an interest in Archaeology, Geology, Natural History, Art, Literature and History, and to maintain a Museum and Library as the centre of that work’. Among the many causes he espoused was the bold and far-sighted acquisition of an architectural and historical treasure dating from the fourteenth century, once the home of an important local family, then a farm for centuries, latterly nearing dereliction. In 1934 Tretower Court was bought by the Brecknock Society, after a five-year campaign to raise the necessary funds, with the generous help of the felicitously named Pilgrim Trust.¹³ The rescue of Tretower was a significant national as well as local cultural event, and the house and adjacent castle are now in the care of the nation.

In 1955 the Brecknock Society bravely published the first volume of its journal *Brycheiniog*, in response to repeated requests. The venture was strongly supported by the Breconshire Education Committee, especially by its inspirational and hard-working Chief Officer, Deiniol Williams, personally and through a Museum and Local History Sub-committee. Early volumes included reports from the county’s (newly founded?) local history societies, and publication of the best parish histories they produced. Cyril Fox’s ideas of the influence of the physical environment on man’s development can be discerned in articles on the geographical history, the geomorphology, the soils of Brecknock and prehistoric Brecknock. In 1960 *Atlas Brycheiniog* was published, in Welsh and English – a cooperative effort by local teachers sponsored by the Education Committee, and dedicated to ‘the children of Brecknock’. An important event of the following year was the reopening of the Brecknock Museum, after substantial structural alterations to its fabric and a complete reorganisation of its collection.

The Houses of Breconshire: The work of Jones and Smith

In 1963 *Brycheiniog* announced the first in a series of studies of vernacular houses in Breconshire – ‘a much neglected field and a subject on which virtually nothing had been written specifically on the houses of the county’. A week’s refresher course had been held for teachers in 1959, entitled ‘Looking at Buildings’, with lectures on ecclesiastical buildings, castles and houses. The latter were given by Peter Smith of the Royal Commission for Ancient Monuments in Wales, by Stanley R. Jones, assistant lecturer at Sheffield College of Art, a meticulous draughtsman who had discovered some important urban medieval buildings, and John T. Smith, Senior Investigator, Royal Commission on Ancient Monuments (England), a pioneer of the study of vernacular architecture in Britain. The course was followed by two separate weeks of reconnaissance of houses to be examined before fieldwork started in September, led by Jones and Smith. About forty houses were visited, measured house-plans were made and photographs taken. The Education Committee immediately sponsored seven more courses, to be carried out in each of the county’s seven Education Districts.¹⁴ This was an enormous task. Fieldwork took place in school holidays, followed by publication of the results for each District in *Brycheiniog* a year or two later. From start to finish the whole enterprise, including publication, took seventeen years. Organisation involved the selection of houses and their preliminary examination, the active cooperation of house owners, the assistance of local people with knowledge of the locality and willingness to drive the investigators to their destinations, and local photographers to record the buildings visited in the course of a long pilgrimage through the Breconshire countryside. In all, some 2000 or more photographs were taken, and remain as an archive in Brecknock Museum, while the total number of houses listed in the successive reports runs into several thousands.

Jones and Smith’s method of work built on that of previous studies. A measured ground-floor plan indicated different phases of building at different dates, and identified significant features such as fireplaces, stairs, doors and windows. Unusual or puzzling features were noted on the written commentary of (most) houses, and there were drawings and photographs, some of which appeared in the journal. All this provided a considerable amount of information about individual houses. The earliest building dates recorded on the plans are seventeenth century (a few are late sixteenth century), and while the investigators emphasized that their dates should not be relied on too closely, if we accept them it seems reasonable to conclude that new building, or rebuilding on earlier sites, was taking place throughout the countryside during the course of that century.

The most numerous types of houses recorded were gentry houses (161) and longhouses (329), making a total of at least 490 surviving seventeenth century or early eighteenth houses in rural Breconshire, distributed as follows:

<i>District</i>	<i>Gentry Houses</i>	<i>Longhouses (all types)</i>
Builth	28	30
Hay and Talgarth	39	44
Brecon	39	124
Crickhowell	16	51
Defynnog	25	40
Vaynor and Penderyn	9	19
Ystradgynlais	5	21

The term 'gentry house' in this context is difficult to define, and Smith and Jones made use of the list of gentry houses c. 1700 in *Atlas Brycheiniog*. Most were situated in the lowlands, but there was no unity of house plan as found in lowland Monmouthshire. On the contrary, Jones and Smith found a bewildering variety of house plans, some of which were loosely grouped together by one common feature, but showing little resemblance to each other, or to longhouses in the same area. But some late seventeenth- or early eighteenth-century houses adopted a recognisably simple plan that showed Renaissance influence: a central front door with windows symmetrically placed on either side opening into an entrance hall with a room on either side, with fireplaces on side walls. A wooden staircase to the upper floor was at the back of the hall, usually in a stairwell, as illustrated in the Jones and Smith drawing of Fig. 1.

The longhouses are much more consistent in plan than the gentry houses. Jones and Smith divided them into three types,¹⁵ of which 'true' longhouses (i.e. family and cattle under one roof with direct access between the two parts) were rare, and 'vestigial' longhouses, where house and byre had been separated and the byre replaced by domestic accommodation, were the most common. The medieval longhouse is described as being aligned down a hillside, the upper part, the hall (i.e. the principal room) set in an excavated hollow for shelter, and the lower part,

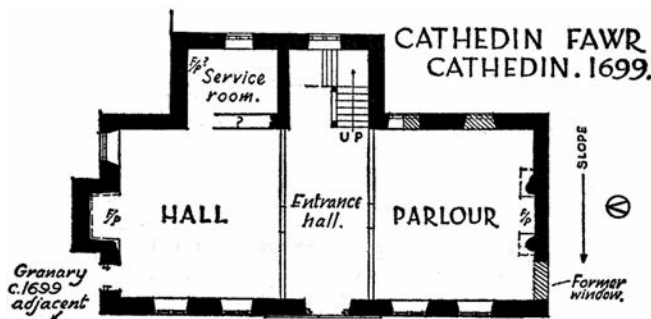


Fig. 1 Outline plan of a gentry house, based on Cathedin Fawr, *Brycheiniog X*, 1964.

the byre, standing at the top of a short, steep slope (to allow cow muck to drain away). A passageway divided the byre from the house. Breconshire has almost no trace of such buildings in their original form, constructed in timber. Jones and Smith's house plans date from the building, or rebuilding, in stone, with a substantial stone fireplace and chimney backing onto the cross passage, around which stairs led to an upper floor. Opposite the fireplace at the upper end of the hall was a stout wooden partition, with a door at each end leading to two small service rooms behind. (Fig. 2)

For each District except Builth, Jones and Smith made sketch maps showing the distribution of old gentry houses and longhouses. Taken together, these maps reveal striking, if not unexpected, settlement patterns. In the fourteenth century English settlements were situated along the river valleys (Fox's Lowland Zone), while the Welsh lived in scattered settlements in the hills.¹⁶ By the seventeenth century

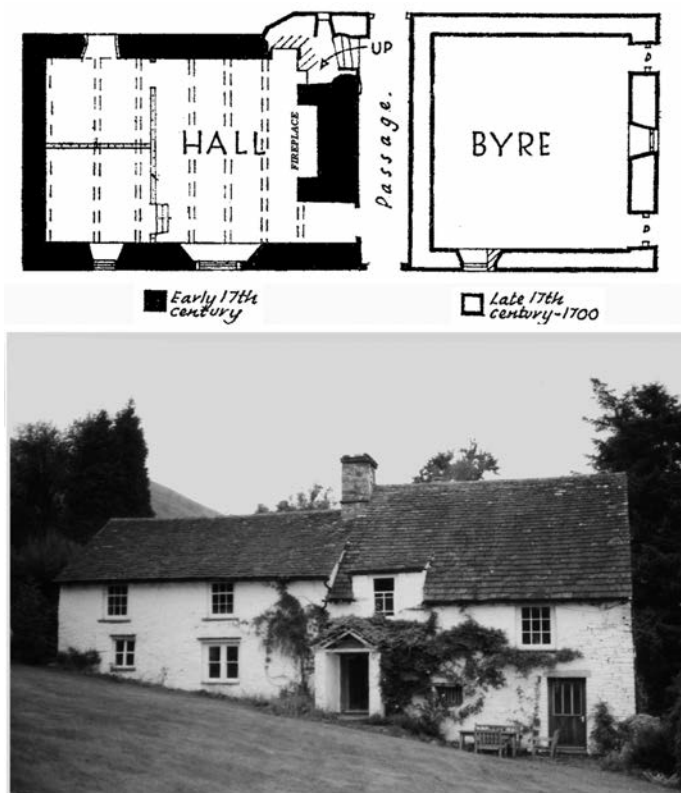


Fig. 2 Outline plan of a longhouse, based on Ffawydd, Llanbedr, *Brycheiniog* XII, 1966, and photograph by Brian Smith of the same house in 1984. The central door leads to a cross passage behind the chimney stack; the byre has been converted into living accommodation of two storeys, making the roofline higher than the hall. The windows are Victorian.

settlement in the lowland areas had spread, and numerous gentry houses had been built – some large, with a considerable amount of land. Longhouses appear to be sited away from the larger rivers and on higher ground. To illustrate this difference a map has been made (Fig. 3) of one District, Crickhowell, based on Jones and Smith and differentiating land above the 800 ft. contour (244 m.). If this pattern of longhouses at a certain height (600–800 ft., 183–244 m.) is repeated in other Districts (and a glance at the other Jones and Smith maps suggests this may be so) there are obvious implications both for their style of building and for the kinds of farming that can be pursued in these areas. They cannot be compared with Fox and Raglan's Regional Houses because that study concerned buildings below the 600 ft. (183 m.) contour and did not include longhouses as such. But in terms of Fox's Lowland and Highland Zones Breconshire is potentially more interesting in that the county was not geographically homogeneous; it was an administrative unit consisting of a small amount of lowland by the Usk and Wye rivers and their tributaries, and a much larger amount of steeply rising mountainside with a profusion of cwms, small streams, varying soils and weather patterns – all admirably illustrated in *Atlas Brycheiniog*.

At the outset of their study Jones and Smith's stated purpose was to discover whether the different types of house building they encountered belonged to a particular regional tradition in Wales. They did not draw any final conclusions, but

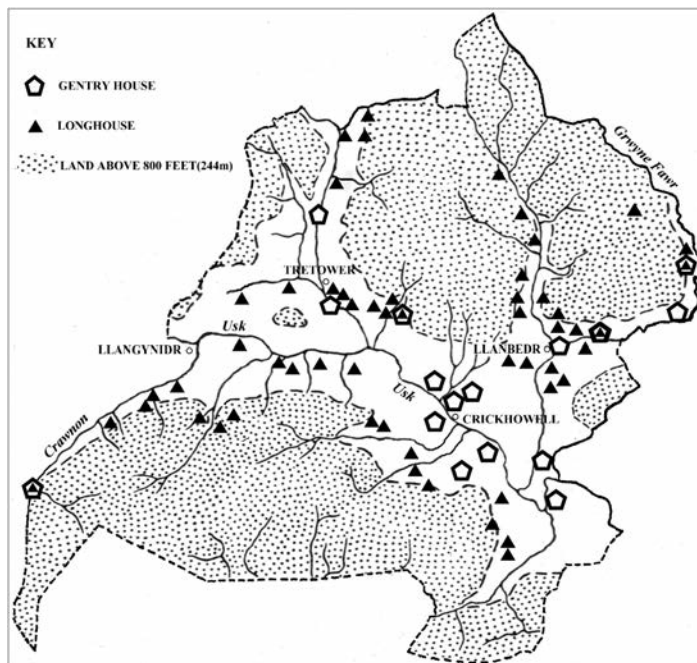


Fig. 3 Map of Gentry Houses and Longhouses, Crickhowell District, based on Jones and Smith, *Brycheiniog* XII.

the impression gained from the plans of gentry houses is one of individuality rather than adherence to any one type or tradition. Longhouses on the other hand appeared to have been derived from those brought to light by Peate. Jones and Smith considered that changes in their planning could be broadly correlated with changes in the social status of their occupants over the three centuries of their existence.

After Jones and Smith: House History

Successive writers on vernacular architecture have emphasized that the study of surviving buildings is not an end in itself; it is a starting point for other aspects of history. Jones and Smith had sought to broaden their enquiry with notes about the families who owned the houses they examined, using Theophilus Jones's *History of the County of Brecknock*. Writing in 1800, the county historian set out to portray the social fabric of upper-class Breconshire with pedigrees demonstrating the descent and inter-connections of its families, against a backdrop of geographical and other salient features of their parishes. These families and their houses are well known; they dominated the county – and in a sense they defined its history in the eyes of the following generations. But Theophilus Jones left out the greater part of the population who were not gentry. It was probably only when vernacular architecture became a legitimate subject for study that more modest farmhouses, of uncertain age and with owners of unknown lineage, were considered worthy of record.

The study of vernacular architectural history offered an approach which no doubt had been tried before, but without the professional knowledge upon which to base estimates about a house, its age and characteristics. Jones and Smith's house plans demonstrated that old houses, often thought of as being 'of' a certain period, had a life of continuing growth and change, enabling people today to identify features that date from the seventeenth century, and to distinguish later additions. The number and size of original rooms, and added rooms, their known or conjectured use, the description of outbuildings on the premises – all can prompt new avenues of enquiry into how people had lived. The identity of the early builder might not be known, but the building itself remains an expression in wood or stone of his skills, his wealth, his aspirations and his view of himself in the community. Similarly those who came after made changes expressive of themselves in the community at later times.

Local architectural features

Architectural details of vernacular buildings are a further source of information about the styles and intentions of their early builders. In Peter Smith's book, *Houses of the Welsh Countryside*¹⁷ is a series of maps showing the distribution of these features in Wales. Some commonly seen in Breconshire are also known throughout the rest of the country, while others are much more 'local', occurring in significant numbers only here, and often also in Monmouthshire. Some examples of local features are illustrated as Figs. 4a, 4b and 4c.¹⁸



Fig. 4a Clockwise from top left: diagonal chimneys; heraldic family crest; decorated doorhead on partition door; fireplace; wood mullioned windows with shutters.



Fig. 4b Clockwise from top left; fireplace stairs and 'candle hole'; well stairs; stone-framed door; partition bench with carved end; pentice supports.

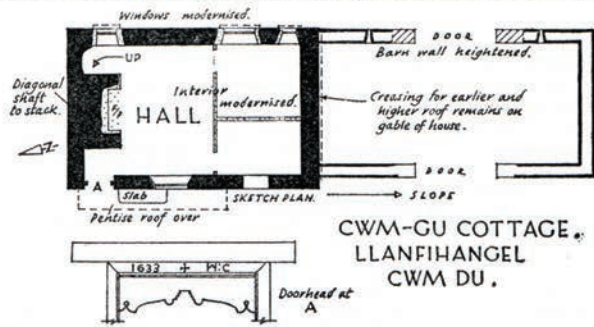


Fig. 4c Cwm-gu Cottage; front, door, back with barn. House plan from *Brycheiniog* XII, 1966.

Outside the house diagonally-set chimneys, a visible mark of status on a gentry house, were popular in seventeenth century Breconshire and Monmouthshire, but apart from a few in Denbighshire they were hardly seen elsewhere in Wales. More expressive of gentry importance was ‘heraldry’ i.e. a family crest and inscription in some prominent place, such as over a door or a fireplace, and a date. Numerous elaborate examples were on show in north Wales, especially in Denbighshire, but there were few in Breconshire and – with the notable exception of Newton – they were modest. Door and window frames could be made of stone or wood, but in Breconshire wood was the usual material as local stone was unsuitable for carving and imported stone had to be used. The wooden windows were small, most with diamond-shaped mullions, and were fitted inside with shutters against the weather. They did not admit much light, which probably explains small recesses in interior stonework called ‘candle holes’. Today these windows can be seen on longhouses, gentry houses and farm buildings (without the shutters) and are characteristic of the south-east part of the county, close to Monmouthshire, where there are many more examples.¹⁹ Their rarity elsewhere is thought to be due to an increasing use of glazed windows.

Inside the house was a large central fireplace, described by Peter Smith as ‘next to glazed windows the greatest contribution to human comfort and warmth’ which from the seventeenth century ‘had reached the houses of all but the very poor’.²⁰ In Breconshire these fireplaces were substantially built, with very thick stone walls and a wood or stone overmantel, often with a bread oven built into the recess. Stone or wooden fireplace stairs curved round the fireplace to an upper floor. In larger gentry houses fireplace stairs were superseded by wooden stairs in a stairwell at the back of the house (see plan, Fig. 1). Opposite the longhouse fireplace was a wooden post-and-panel partition dividing the room from two small rooms behind, with doors at each end. Carpenters in Breconshire and Monmouthshire carved shaped doorheads, a practice that was local, not found elsewhere. Jones and Smith describe benches attached to the partitions, with carved bench ends, as a survival, they thought, of ‘the original seat of honour’ of the head of the household.²¹ However the partition bench of one house has a long table in front of it, suggesting a more democratic row of inhabitants eating their meal opposite the fire on which it was cooked. It is not apparent how ‘local’ this bench detail is. The pentice – a covered way in front of the house – is also local to Breconshire and Monmouthshire, rarely surviving in its entirety, but it can be deduced from wooden supports protruding from the walls (Figs 4b and 4c). In strong contrast to the smaller houses, large gentry houses acquired tall glazed windows showing well-lit rooms, high ceilings, often richly decorated with plaster motifs, wainscot walls and massive entrance doors (see Figs 4b and 12).

The features illustrated here have been taken from different buildings, but one builder managed to assemble a cluster of locally significant seventeenth-century features on and in his very small house, **Cwm-gu cottage**, in Cwmdu parish

(Fig. 4c). Immediately noticeable from the outside is a single diagonal chimney. A pentice runs the length of the building, its supports being a continuation of internal cross beams, according to a CADW report, which confirmed its listed building status as Grade II in 1998. Shaped doorheads of various designs are common in the area, but the one on the door of this house is exactly the same as one at Wern in the parish. (This may or may not be significant.) On the lintel of the door at Cwm-gu cottage is carved HC + 1633 – one of the earliest date inscriptions in Breconshire.

Jones and Smith's report mentioned mullioned windows (since replaced). They described the house as a longhouse that had lost the byre, and suggested it might be a rebuild and conversion in two or three stages. At the time of their visit there were lively discussions among architectural historians about the origin and classification of longhouses; but whatever the outcome of the debate, in vernacular architectural terminology Cwm-gu cottage is not a cottage.²² More immediately intriguing is the social context of the house's features. Its builder, HC, had a keen awareness of what was up-to-date and fashionable in house building. Who was he? The answer may lie in the existence of the very small manor of Cwm-gu – a collection of farms on the mountainside between Crickhowell and Tretower, of which Cwm-gu cottage was a part, situated on the lane next to Cwm-gu-fawr farmhouse. Another house in the manor, **Cwm-gu-fach**, was visited by Jones and Smith, who gave it a seventeenth century building date and photographed a partition bench and bench end as described above.²³ The manor was held by the Vaughan family, who also held the surrounding large manor of Tretower. There are records of Cwm-gu manor's court proceedings from 1708 to 1812 when it was sold to the Duke of Beaufort, but there are apparently no records before 1708.²⁴

Observation of the seventeenth century features of Cwm-gu cottage led to a link between the architecture of an old house and the social circumstances of its early existence. That link brought further questions. Who was HC? Was he the manorial steward? Was he a member of the Vaughan family? Perhaps his house served as the manorial court house? The search for answers to such questions is one of the pleasures of local history.

Documentary sources for the history of houses

What were the economic and social circumstances that permitted and no doubt encouraged the building of so many hundreds of houses in rural seventeenth century Breconshire? Their presence suggests that the county – at least its wealthier classes – had a share in the generally increasing prosperity of England and Wales at that period. It is difficult to be specific because documentary, especially statistical, evidence concerning the growth and geographical distribution of wealth at that time is almost non-existent. From what little information is available, from Theophilus Jones and others, it can only be gleaned that land, the most important source of wealth, was in the hands of a very few families in Breconshire, some of it

inherited, some acquired.²⁵ There had been a tradition of service to the English crown, on the fields of Agincourt and elsewhere in earlier times, but by the late sixteenth century more peaceably at the English Court in London, services which were given in the expectation of a generous royal grant of lands as reward, including some in their home county. By the seventeenth century monetary inflation and an increasing population countrywide were benefiting Welsh farmers. Breconshire farmers' cattle, sheep, and 'cottons' (a rough cloth) were exported – but from which farms, in what quantity and to what destinations is not known. With such a vague background, the best guide to the county's rising prosperity would seem to be the visible evidence of the houses themselves.

The gentry houses along the Wye and Usk valleys examined and photographed by Jones and Smith are a pageant of styles and periods, improvements, innovation, decoration and adornment. They reveal the domestic and social use to which wealth was put by their seventeenth century builders and later owners. They announce pride and pleasure in their homes, ambition, enterprise, and an awareness of a world far beyond the shire, from which they were keen to absorb the latest architectural ideas. Jones and Smith found similarities in a few of the house plans, but in essence these houses are all different, an expression of the individuality and probably the competitive spirit of their owners. A few are sited on the mountain, built like longhouses, and are termed 'gentry longhouses' from the observation of superior woodwork or other features. The longhouses themselves, more numerous than gentry houses but for the most part situated above the valleys (see Fig. 3), were constructed for the purpose of survival on a hillside by rearing cattle and sheep on pasture and moorland in a type of house suitable for their way of life. They too differ in detail as their owners improved their circumstances and were able to add extra rooms and comforts. They testify to the persistence of moderately wealthy yeomen or smallholders in difficult territory with a harsher climate and poorer land than the gentry living in the houses below. They are part of the population not recorded by Theophilus Jones. As yet we know little about most of them because documentary records concerning them are difficult to find, and for some it may be that this architectural information is the only early record we have.

The history of individual houses however is an attractive subject for study, and since the publication of Jones and Smith's articles many people have begun the history of a house, often their own, by a search through *Brycheiniog*. A house plan will probably indicate the earliest building date as the seventeenth century, but the owner at that time may not be known. Moreover, the house itself may not have had a name at that early date, as many documents give the name of the house owner and the parish but not of the property itself. This is a major setback, yet local and national archives have considerable numbers of family or estate papers, or other documents that may not have been thought of in the context of house history. Estate surveys and maps, most dating from the 1760s, are most informative; they were

made for landowners to obtain detailed information concerning the whereabouts, the state of cultivation, name and size of holdings, names of tenants and rents to be paid. But they cover only parts – usually the richer parts – of the county. Parish records can be useful, but their survival is patchy. Wills and inventories were made by a very small proportion of the population, by people likely to have fairly substantial houses. Thus, while documentary records after 1800 are relatively plentiful and usually easy of access, success in a search for the early history of a house examined by Jones and Smith has to depend on a very uneven survival of sources – and luck! But anyone interested in the history of a house should not be deterred. What at first appears to be a dead end can sometimes turn into a surprisingly fruitful discovery – if not the one intended! The following examples, which I have called ‘case studies’, are intended to illustrate this.

Case study: A rich probate inventory

A probate inventory is one of the few sources of information about the interior furnishings of houses. Not all inventories are helpful. They were drawn up with varying degrees of care by appraisers – local men of some standing in the parish – and give only the name of the deceased and the parish. These inventories are hard to interpret, but observation of a small sample²⁶ suggests that most consisted of farm stock, much more valuable than ‘household stuff’, usually dismissed as a small sum of money, with no description. Furniture, when mentioned, might consist of a table bord (top), a featherbed or a flock bed, a cupboard and a kitchen utensil or two. ‘Wearing apparel’ was considered practically worthless; lists of debts suggest the reason for some inventories. Of course there were exceptions – say, a gentleman with a supply of pewter plates, fine sheets, carpets, towels, table napkins, perhaps silver spoons – which is frustrating if the name of the house is not known.

It is therefore a revelation to see an exceptionally well drawn up and detailed inventory discussed in an article in *Brycheiniog* by Ann Selwood, namely that of Thomas Games of **Aberbran Fawr**, Penpont, taken in 1643.²⁷ Built in the sixteenth century, Aberbran was one of the ‘greater’ gentry houses, and the Games family was one of the most important families in the county. When Jones and Smith visited the house only some walls remained from the earliest building period, but enough details survived for them to draw a suggested house plan. They pointed out that Aberbran was architecturally similar to three other houses of the ruling families of Games, Vaughan and Herbert, who were closely related to each other,²⁸ and thought that Aberbran should have had a gatehouse, as theirs did, though no trace remained. Selwood found a gatehouse listed in the 1643 inventory, in use and furnished with three bedsteads and a livery cupboard.

Because Thomas Games’s inventory was very detailed, naming every room and its contents in detail, Selwood was able to compare it with Jones and Smith’s plan, and to construct a plan showing how the house may have looked in 1643.²⁹ The names of the rooms and their contents indicate that there had been considerable

changes and improvements since the sixteenth century. The ground floor consisted of the hall and service rooms, while the family lived on the first floor, where there was a great chamber over the hall, a middle chamber, and a suite of smaller rooms along the length of the building, all with a fireplace except the Painted Room. Wall paintings were popular in Tudor times but so few have survived that it is of considerable interest to find a record in a Breconshire house. Of the other rooms on that floor 'My Ladies Chamber' was the most important, comfortably furnished, with a standing bed with bolsters, blankets and rugs, a table, a desk, cushions and hangings on the walls. The whole inventory gives a vivid impression of comfort and plenty enjoyed by a wealthy family, sadly cut off in full flood; but for that reason very different from the impression of impecunious old age in many inventories.

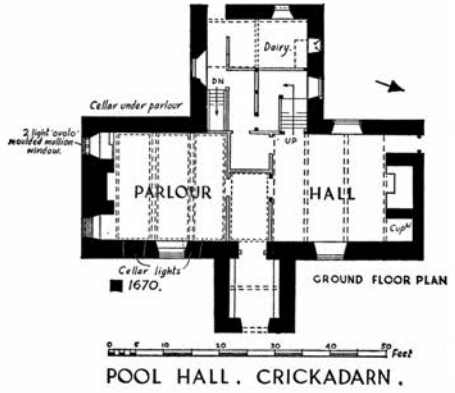
Thomas Games died intestate. As he was Captain Thomas Games, Selwood suggested he may have been killed in the Civil War. The gatehouse was manned, there were weapons lying about, and the lack of animals such as horses could mean they had been drafted for military use. The house itself, though not far from Brecon but situated at a secluded spot on the banks of the river Usk, could have seemed vulnerable at such a time. Despite searches there appears to be no information about Thomas Games's military career.

Case study: three gentry houses with unexpected connections (map Fig. 17) North Breconshire, much of it lying within Fox's Highland Zone, appears to have suffered an 'invasion' of Lowland culture in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, in the form of some fine newly-built (or rebuilt) gentry houses. Several were visited by Jones and Smith, but their inhabitants had been paid scant attention by Theophilus Jones. Noticing this, Ruth Bidgood, poet and pilgrim, embarked upon a determined and impressively successful search into the family histories of their owners. Her work, published in a series of articles in *Brycheiniog*, is a major achievement of diligent enquiry using a variety of sources.³⁰

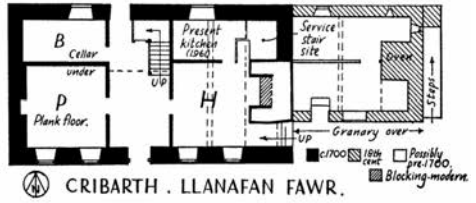
The study of three of these gentry houses throws light on some social conventions and changes of status in the county. Jones and Smith found **Pool Hall**, Crickadarn, (Fig. 5a) a little old-fashioned but 'redeemed by the richness of its woodwork'.³¹ Its builder, Howel Powel, whose initials and the date 1670 are on the door, is thought to have come from a family of modest 'non-conformist squires' in Trawscoed.³² However, it must have suited Howel Powel as a man with social aspirations who was to become sheriff of the county in 1676. The second house, **Cribarth**, Llanafan Fawr (Fig. 5b), dating from the late seventeenth century, delighted Jones and Smith by its combination of 'elements of a native ruggedness' with 'a lowland sophistication expressed in the smooth finish of the eaves and excellent, though not perfectly symmetrical proportions'.³³ Bidgood discovered the name of the builder was David ap John ap Morgan, gentleman, who died in 1712, but his antecedents were not known with certainty, and it could only be guessed that the sources of his wealth and enterprise were farming, perhaps cattle droving, and some connections



a



b



c



Fig. 5 (a) Pool Hall, (b) Cribarth, (c) Llwynderw, from *Brycheiniog* IX, 1963; XXIV, 1990.

with London. The third house, **Llwynderw**, Llandewi Abergwesin, built in 1796, was a three-storey, handsome mansion, described by Jones and Smith as of ‘the excellent proportions of late Georgian architecture’ (Fig. 5c).³⁴ Its appearance in the remote hill-country of Llandewi Abergwesin must have seemed extraordinary to local people. Theophilus Jones recorded polite astonishment that ‘in the wildest, most uncultivated and uninhabitable parts of Breconshire . . . notwithstanding the distance from markets, the badness of the roads, and the inclemency of the climate during the greater part of the year, a gentleman of the name of Jones, possessed of considerable property, real and personal, and a magistrate, has built a house called Llwynderw, or the Oak Grove, in this parish, where he resides’.³⁵ The county historian could easily have discovered who the anonymous Jones was, but it was Bidgood who informed her readers that he was David Jones, gentleman, grandson of the builder of Cribarth. He was rumoured to have ten thousand or even twenty thousand sheep, and the source of his wealth was said to be treasure hoard of gold coins! Bidgood also recorded what Theophilus Jones did not mention – that the families of Pool Hall, Cribarth and Llwynderw were closely related; more significantly perhaps, they were religious nonconformists (one of the earliest meeting houses was on the land of Cribarth) in an area ‘abounding in non-conformist gentry’. Their presence suggests that a group of enterprising men, geographically and socially on the fringes of Breconshire society, by dint of successful farming and acquisition of land in previous generations, had acquired wealth and were acquiring status. They were evidently educated, had probably travelled well beyond the county, and were of a certain independence of spirit that led them to choose non-conformity in religion, as well as in their dwelling houses.

Bidgood used an impressive number of sources – houses, land, inventories, collections of family papers etc. In these articles she was writing as a family historian. Family history is an integral part of house history, but there is a difference of emphasis. Family history focuses on genealogy – the chain of births, marriages and deaths from family origins to the present day, or the death of the line. House history conveys the idea of ‘home’ – sometimes called ‘hearth’ – a building holding the generations of owners who passed through it and made their mark. Houses have a longer life than families, and old houses have an attraction akin to the drawing power to visitors of ancient monuments of which almost no history is known.

Case study: a will, the cattle trade, and a rare survival (map Fig. 17)

As family historians know, the discovery of a will can open the floodgates to an enormous amount of information. This example concerns **Llannerch-y-cawr**, Llanwrthwl. The house is familiar to architectural historians as an important longhouse, visited and recorded in print successively by Iorwerth Peate, Jones and Smith, Peter Smith and Richard Suggett.³⁶



Fig. 6 Llannerch-y-cawr, before restoration, by kind permission of RCAHMW.

The house (Fig.6) is situated on the northern border of Breconshire, in one of the remotest parts of the county, above the river Claerwen at the southern end of the Caban Coch reservoir. It lies at 274 m., just below the edge of a mountain plateau, sheltered from the prevailing south-westerly wind but facing north. The mountain terrain above its pasture fields consists of unimproved sheepwalk with an occasional shelter, thick peat deposits, wide areas of tussock grass and inhospitable bog, and some drier plateaux. According to *Atlas Brycheiniog* the region is one of the wettest – over 2000 mm of rain per annum – and one of the highest – 305–610 m. in the county. This farmhouse is a striking example of survival in a hostile environment.

In his commentary on the house, Richard Suggett refers to deeds of which the earliest is dated 1548, when Lewis ap Ieuan Llewelyn Moythe bought lands including Llannerch-y-cawr. Suggett attributes the building of the house to him, and improvements to his son Edward Lewis, who let it in 1579 to William Edward. This information enabled me to find the will of Edward ap Lewis, gentleman, of Llanwrthwl, dated 1617,³⁷ which has shed light in more than one direction. His dwelling house was **Tyddyn a thir Edward ap Lewis in Aber Marchnant** [Smallholding on the land of Edward ap Lewis at the mouth of the Boundary Stream]. He owned, in the parish, **Tyddyn a thir Llannerch-y-cawr** [the giant's clearing] and **Tyddyn a thir Bron Paradwys** [the hill breast of Paradise] from which a stream of that name runs down from the mountain above Llannerch-y-cawr for a short distance before merging with the Rhiwnant, flowing down to the Claerwen river. The first property may be that known later as Marchnant House, described as 'a post-medieval farmhouse on the site of a former house now in ruins with only low walls remaining, approximately 20m.x 10m.'³⁸ There appears to be no record of the third property, the Paradise site; it may have been located somewhere near Esgair Hafod (345 m.) above the nineteenth century mines, and may have been a summer house.

From his will it appears that Edward ap Lewis was a prosperous gentleman farmer. Besides the smallholdings in Llanwrthwl he owned six ‘messuages or tenements’ in the neighbouring parish of Llanafan Fawr,³⁹ some of which he had bought, and one in mortgage to him for the sum of £110. Like many prosperous farmers he was the local moneylender: sixteen people in neighbouring parishes owed him a total of £13 6d. Evidently a man of some foresight, Edward bequeathed to his wife a farm stock which could be put to ‘increase’ (as the old phrase goes) for the future: twenty kine and a bull, six oxen, one horse, one mare, all his sheep and goats (dozens? hundreds?) and £40. He divided his property between his two sons, in the Welsh manner of partible inheritance; his daughter received £40, his base son £50 and his base daughter three heifers. (It was not unusual for gentry to acknowledge illegitimate children in this way.) It is most likely that the occupier of Llannerch-y-cawr (not named) was a relation, probably one of his sons.

The list of Edward ap Lewis’s farm stock indicates that cattle breeding was successful and lucrative in this remote upland – rich pickings for cattle thieves. Suggett quotes evidence of the problem of cattle theft and its associated violence in Wales in the sixteenth century, showing that some of the areas most affected correspond with the presence of longhouses (not found everywhere in mountainous regions) in the region, naming specifically the northern part of Breconshire.⁴⁰ Llannerch-y-cawr was built a century earlier than other longhouses examined by Jones and Smith. It is also of greater length, i.e. 75 ft. (23 m.), while most longhouses in the county were 60 ft. (18m.). Longhouses examined by Peate were larger, some measuring up to 95 ft. (29 m.).⁴¹ Why this difference? Could the later date and somewhat smaller size of most Breconshire longhouses mean that cattle theft had become less of a threat, not requiring so much secure accommodation?

The name Llannerch-y-cawr appears in research by Ruth Bidgood as one of the Breconshire properties owned by a Radnorshire family named Howell, later Powell, of Nantgwyllt, a house in the valley on the north side of the Claerwen river.⁴² Like Llannerch-y-cawr, Nantgwyllt is recorded in sixteenth century deeds, and like some Breconshire gentry houses it was rebuilt in the early eighteenth century, a large and handsome mansion, following the acquisition of much land in Radnorshire by its owners. The Howell-Powell family history, of some complexity, occasionally mentions Llannerch-y-cawr, in particular a marriage of a Lewis of that house to a Powell girl, and a John Lewis who died there in 1704 who was a labourer.⁴³ It seems that the longhouse had by then declined in status, as happened to many gentry houses.

In modern times Llannerch-y-cawr has come unscathed through ground-breaking events. The tithe map of 1843, which shows the Llannerch-y-cawr was owned by Lewis of Nantgwyllt, has indications that mining was already under way in the immediate vicinity. In 1852 Thomas Lewis Lloyd of Nantgwyllt leased ‘copper, lead and other minerals under a parcel of open pastureland called Cefn

Dairhiw' (above Rhiwnant, the next property upstream and adjacent to Llanech-y-cawr) to two businessmen for 21 years⁴⁴ but a later Ordnance Survey map marks mines and a quarry within the area as disused. A National Museum of Wales mineral database refers to Rhiwnant Dome, where small gold grains in the stream sediments had been found (1993), though the bedrock source had not been identified. Llannerch-y-cawr's land was the scene of some industrial activity in the nineteenth century, albeit briefly, but a more interesting question from the point of view of this article is whether the sixteenth century owners knew or had heard of the presence of mineral deposits? If so, had that any bearing on the construction of Llannerch-y-cawr? This leads to the question of place names. Who (or what) was the giant? Was he a forester, or some manorial official guarding the frontier of Brecknock lordship? What and where was paradise? A place where gold was found? As historians know, the boundaries of fact, fantasy and folklore are dangerously tempting territory. Chris Grooms, an authority on Welsh giants, has an explanation for Llannerch-y-cawr which makes sense as folklore.⁴⁵ The clearing has the sinister connotation of 'awful, hideous, frightful' in the element 'erch'. The author suggests that an area just south of the farm 'with curious and exceptional shapes squared off in terraces rests next to a waterfall' (actually on the Marchnant stream) and 'may be the source of the description of the site'. Two other giants have legends connected with waterfalls – and with graves.

Notwithstanding these connections, the presence of a giant must have been beneficial, for in 1891 Llannerch-y-cawr was still a farmhouse – according to census records – containing a farmer and his wife, their five adult children, four farm servants and a baby. Signs of the declining mining industry are evident in the four elderly lead miners and one copper miner living in the vicinity. But two years later there was a different assault on the landscape with the construction, upstream, of the huge Claerwen reservoir, a work that took eleven years. The Elan reservoir was built later, in 1946–52. Situated away from the works on the mountain, Llannerch-y-cawr evidently caused no obstruction. Today the house is still there. Over the centuries it seems to have been let to tenants who had no desire to enlarge or improve it, and so remained unimproved as a farm until the late twentieth century, when it was listed as a Grade II* building. It is now under the protection of the Welsh Water Elan Valley Trust, which has restored it and put it to twenty-first century use as holiday accommodation for visitors to the mountain.

Case study: a wealth of stone farm buildings, and a stonemason (map Fig. 17)

Tyn-y-llwyn (Figs 7a, b and c) is a sixteenth century longhouse situated on steep mountainside at c.1000 ft. (305m.) in the parish of Partrishow on the Monmouthshire border. The historical value of both house and farm buildings (now listed Grade II*) lies in the apparent lack of any significant change over the

succeeding centuries.⁴⁶ In 1987 the farm buildings looked old. They were constructed of mortared rubble, simple in shape and to the untutored eye indistinguishable one from another. But when the use of each building is explained, the centuries' old life of an upland farm comes into focus. The owner, Len Parker, farmer and sometime stonemason, took me on a guided tour of the farm buildings, explaining their use and the number of animals they could accommodate. They were measured and photographed. Then a plan of the farmstead was made (Fig. 7c) showing sites of the buildings as follows:

1. The house
2. Stallion's stable.
3. Dairy
4. Chaffhouse
5. Stable (up to 5 large horses).
6. Wainhouse.
7. Cider mill.
8. Malthouse (ruin).
9. Pigsty, with enclosure adjoining.
10. Calves' cot.
11. Threshing barn.
12. Calves' cot.
13. Beast house (10 beasts).
14. Modern shed (not shown).
15. Pigsty, with enclosure adjoining.
16. Field shelter.
17. Spring inlet.
18. Bull's cot.
19. Goose cot.
20. Flagstone path.
21. Terrace.
22. Granary (on first floor of older part of house).

The soil here is Old Red Sandstone, and the buildings were made of stone taken from a nearby quarry on the farm premises. This stone is fissile and the flat, thin shapes of the top quarry layers were split to make roof tiles, or laid in slim courses. From the lower layers the quarry also yielded squarer, harder blocks, used for walls and footings. Flagstones were laid on the house floor, and the threshing barn floor. Outside the house huge flagstones made a walkway to the stables. A perilous-looking flight of stone steps led from the house down to the yard. The farmyard being very rough and steep, the more steeply-sloping ground was covered with pebbles from the river below to stop the horses slipping. The floors of the stables, the beast house and bull's cot consisted of more pebbles with stone runnels to carry away the waste. Heavy stone tiles were laid on the almost-flat roof of the wainhouse, which had to be buttressed in the 1920s. Post stones were used for gates. In the wall of a pigsty enclosure was a smooth stone aperture to allow food to be pushed through. The front of the goose-cot consisted of two large stone slabs, the corners sliced to make an entrance for the occupants, while its flat roof of loose stones, topped by moss and a garden flower, had a slightly rakish air. This is local work, surely vernacular architecture at its most ingenious? A broken datestone set in a wall indicates that one of the buildings (almost certainly the barn) was built in the 1680s. No doubt the datestone was placed there by John Powell, a family member described in census records as a stonemason. His initials and the date 1857 are on a stone set close to the earlier one. A field barn showing more sophisticated cut stonework bears the same initials and the date 1859. The farmstead area was enclosed by drystone walling, with a gate at each end of the yard.



Fig. 7a Tyn-y-llwyn, Partrishow, 1987. Photographs by Jenny Barnes.

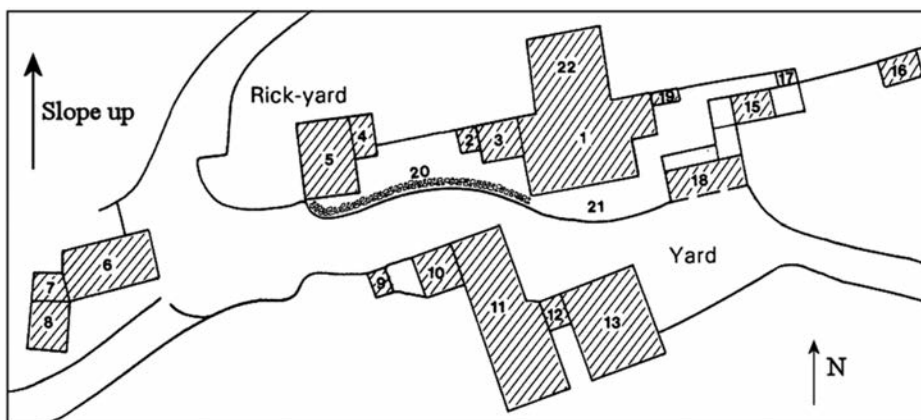


Fig.7 (b) (top) Tyn-y-llwyn from the south-east, with owner Len Parker, and date stones, 1987. (c) (bottom) Plan of Tyn-y-llwyn farm buildings; see text.

Case study: Llangwathen: one of the oldest houses in Wales (map Fig. 17)

Fig. 8 Llangwathen, Hay Rural, from *Brycheiniog* XXVIII, 1995. Photograph Leslie Evans.

Llangwathen, (Fig.8) is similar in size and building type to Tyn-y-llwyn but quite different in character. Whereas Tyn-y-llwyn achieved a rugged grandeur of stonework blending in with the surrounding mountain, Llangwathen had a quiet lowland beauty, situated as it is on gentler-rising ground, with its own mill on the river Dulas near Hay-on-Wye. In an article in *Brycheiniog* Fred Lewes, descendant of the Lewis family who lived there from the mid-sixteenth to the late nineteenth century, chose to describe not the house but the land.⁴⁷ It happened that a parish boundary and a manor boundary ran through the farmyard in Elizabethan times and earlier, bisecting the sixty-three acre holding, the legal consequences of which are documented in national and local archives. Of interest to this article is that its owner Howell Lewis had bought thirty acres of land south of Hay, for £200, in 1573, and he was at one time a steward of the manor of English Hay, an important local manorial official. Fred Lewes's article concentrates on the family tree from that time until the property was sold in 1899.

Jones and Smith, who visited Llangwathen four times, found evidence that it had been timber-built in the fifteenth or early sixteenth century, and rebuilt in stone in c.1600. More has been discovered about its early history by RCAHMW in the course of their Welsh Dendrochronology Project. The Royal Commission has put considerable effort into tree-ring dating of 'peasant hall houses' in view of the absence of other, i.e. documentary and archaeological, evidence of their early

existence. A full and comprehensible explanation and discussion of the principles, use and limitations of this new technique is given in Suggett's book on Radnorshire houses,⁴⁸ in which a list of sites successfully sampled is given in date order. The earliest house is **Brecon Priory** (the Deanery), 1250, followed by **Hafodygarreg**, Crickadarn, 1402 (a house not visited by Jones and Smith) and **Llangwathen**, 1418 – the three earliest found (so far) in the whole of Wales! **Llannerch-y-cawr** also appears as no. 58 in the list, the date 1588–9 obtained from a later inserted chimney. Historians will have noted that the earliest rural date coincides with the later phases of the Owen Glyndwr rebellion, when in 1402–3 he led successful campaigns through the Brecon area. Though locally undocumented, his known ravages and burnings bring the thought that many farmhouses were then destroyed, so are not now accessible to dendrochronology or to other means of study.

In the Footsteps of Jones and Smith: A Short Follow-up

In the summer of 1997 I visited about seventy old houses in the south-east part of the county, taking with me photographs of the properties from the Jones and Smith collection in Brecknock Museum, kindly lent by the museum's curator, David Moore. The purpose was a small-scale follow-up of their visits some thirty years before to see what changes, if any, there had been. Houses, interior details and farm buildings were photographed, concentrating on gentry houses in the Hay-Llangorse area, and longhouses in the Crickhowell area. As this was not a formal study, the selection of houses depended upon what looked interesting in Jones and Smith's house plans, convenience and luck.

In general there were very few major changes to the houses themselves, so far as could be seen from the old photographs. Some gentry houses were now working farms, and I became increasingly aware that the house was only part of an economic and social entity, and that the farm buildings could be as impressive and informative as the house itself. The Crickhowell longhouses were more numerous and less well known than the gentry houses. Many are surrounded by neat green fields full of sheep, often not belonging to the house itself. From the hundreds of photographs I took I have selected a few for inclusion here (Figs. 9–15) as examples of longhouses and gentry houses, some with their farm buildings, some becoming derelict, others being restored. A brief description of each is included in the captions. All the houses illustrated in this article are mapped at Fig. 17.

In April 1998 Brecknock Museum mounted an exhibition of photographs of houses taken by the photographers on Jones and Smith's visits, and some of the coloured ones taken in 1997. The exhibition was well attended,⁴⁹ and we were delighted to welcome John Smith and Stanley Jones as honoured guests on the opening night (Fig. 16).



Fig. 9a Hendreforwydd, Llangattock, 1997. Top: the longhouse. Bottom: range of farm buildings (18c.?) descending slope parallel to house.



Fig. 9b Hendreforwydd, Llangattock, interior, 1997. Top: post-and-panel partition in the hall. Bottom: fireplace with bread oven.



Fig. 10 Fedw, Hillside, Llangattock. Top: the longhouse, 1964. Photograph from Jones and Smith. Bottom; the longhouse converted into holiday accommodation for a Bristol youth club, 1997.



Fig.11 Penyrheol, Cwmdu. Top: derelict longhouse examined by Jones and Smith, 1964. Bottom: the longhouse ruin, 1997.



Fig. 12a Penywrlod, Llanigon, gentry house, 1997.
Top: 18c. hall added to earlier house.
Bottom: 'Stables' once with an unusual decorative plaster frieze.



Fig. 12b Penywrlod, Llanigon , interior.

Top: one of several decorative plaster ceilings, and part of wainscot.

Bottom: part of the older (17c.?) house. The house was burned down after these photographs were taken in 1997.



Fig. 13a Cathedin Fawr farm, formerly a gentry house, dated 1699, built for Thomas Vaughan (see also Fig.1).

Top: house, with granary (left).

Bottom: house, view from rear over Llangorse lake, 1997.



Fig. 13b Cathedin Fawr farm, 1997. Top: farm buildings and enclosure. Bottom: granary (1699) left; grain on first floor, right. 1997.



Fig. 14a Dderw, Pipton. 1997. Top: farm yard. Bottom: large barn, dated '1687, porches and aisles added 1854'.



Fig. 14b Dderw farmhouse, previously a gentry house, dating from late 16c.
Bottom: barn roof interior, 1997.



Fig. 15a Tredwstan Court. 1997. Late 17c. gentry house in course of restoration.



Fig. 15b Tredwstan Court, 1997. Top: stone ‘Breconshire’ barn. Bottom: wood-framed ‘Radnorshire’ barn awaiting attention.

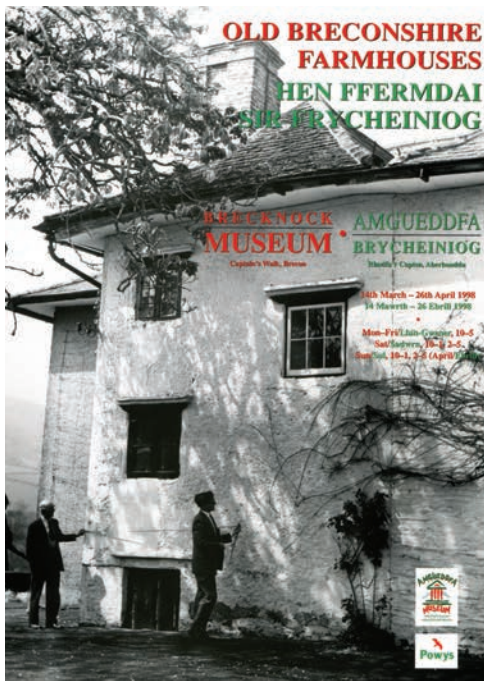


Fig. 16 Left: Poster for exhibition at Brecknock Museum of photographs taken in the course of Jones and Smith's survey; they are measuring Scethrog House, 1963. Below: left to right, Edward Parry, editor, *Brycheiniog*, John T. Smith and Stanley R. Jones at Christ College during their visit to Brecon for the opening of the exhibition, March–April 1998.

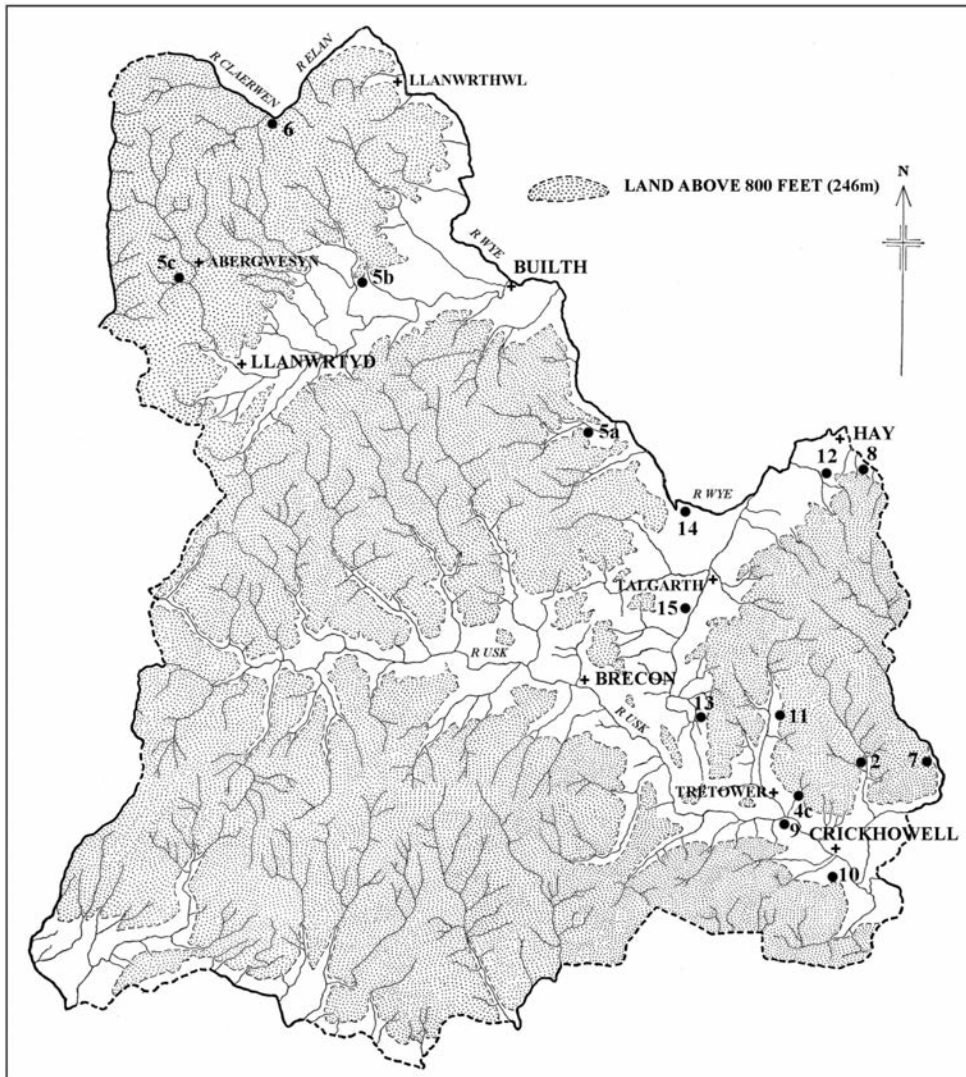


Fig. 17 Location of houses illustrated, showing figure number.
Background map of Breconshire adapted from *Atlas Brycheiniog*, 1960.

The Future

Since the publication of 'Houses of Breconshire' in *Brycheiniog* considerable research into vernacular architecture has been undertaken and published by Welsh academic institutions, in particular the National Museum of Wales, CADW, and The Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Wales, all of which have websites which are being added to and updated. RCAHMW has made a major contribution in bringing its work to public notice in the publication of important technical works and local studies, some of which are referred to but not discussed in this article. In 2010 The Royal Commission also sought to engage a wider public through collaboration in a television series, *Cyflwyno Cartrefi Cefn Gwlad Cymru* (*Introducing Houses of the Welsh Countryside*). Fortunately, television being in a sense ephemeral, a companion book was also published, clearly written, thought-provoking and beautifully illustrated.⁵⁰

Primary documentary sources have also become much more easily available, as the National Library of Wales, the National Archives and others put on the Internet enormous amounts of information previously obtainable only by personal searches at their archives. This not only saves time and money but enables people to tap wider resources than they may otherwise have considered, giving a much wider scope for ideas as well as more detail for subjects already known.

This article has been able to consider only a small number of houses, most in one part of the county (Fig. 17). It would seem very worthwhile for other people to do similar follow-ups in other areas, as much may have happened – and in some cases has happened – since the investigations of Jones and Smith. Every old house has a history, and every house history is a contribution to the history of Breconshire as a whole.

The importance of farm buildings to the life and economy of a farm has been mentioned in this article. Richard Suggett informs me that at the same time as Jones and Smith were studying houses in Breconshire, R.W. Brunskill⁵¹ was working with Breconshire Education Committee (no doubt at the instigation of Deiniol Williams!) on Breconshire farm buildings. The results were never published, but the record cards are in RCHAMW's National Monuments Record. Surely these records would be a good start to a study of this most interesting and important subject?

Acknowledgements

Thanks first and foremost to my husband Martin Redwood, who prepared the illustrations and gave patient and unstinting support.

Edward Parry valiantly waded through two early drafts and made important improvements. The final draft has been read by Nigel Blackamore, John Gibbs and Richard Suggett, whose most helpful suggestions I have incorporated in the text.

PAMELA REDWOOD

Notes

¹ The following account is taken from Stevens, Catrin, *Iorwerth C. Peate: Writers of Wales Series*, University of Wales Press, 1986.

² Peate, Iorwerth C., *The Welsh House: a study in folk culture*, 1940, Llanerch reprint 2000, pp. 4–5.

³ Fox, Sir Cyril, *The personality of Britain: its influence on inhabitant and invader in prehistoric and early historic times*, National Museum of Wales, 1932.

⁴ Peate and Fox both had books of essays written in their honour by colleagues: Jenkins, G. ed. *Studies in folk life; essays in honour of Iorwerth C. Peate*, Routledge, 1969; Foster, I. Ll. and Alcock, L, eds. *Culture and environment: essays in honour of Sir Cyril Fox*, Routledge, 1963.

⁵ Fox, Sir Cyril, 'Peasant crofts in north Pembrokeshire', *Antiquity*, vol. XI, 1937, pp. 427–40.

⁶ Stevens, op cit.

⁷ The results were published as Fox, Sir Cyril and Lord Raglan, *Monmouthshire Houses: a study of building techniques and smaller house-plans in the fifteenth to seventeenth centuries*, National Museum of Wales, first edition, 1951–4, second edition, 1994.

⁸ Ibid. Vol. III, p.136 (2nd edition).

⁹ Ibid, New introduction to part 1 of the second edition by Peter Smith, 1993, p. xi.

¹⁰ Peate, I. C., *Welsh Folk Museum, St. Fagans, handbook*, National Museum of Wales, 1967.

¹¹ Morgan, K. O., *Rebirth of a Nation, Wales, 1880–1980*, Clarendon 1981, pp. 358–362.

¹² The following account is taken from early volumes of the journal *Brycheiniog*, especially Vol. I, p. 157 and Vol. IV, obituary of Sir John Conway Lloyd.

¹³ The Pilgrim Trust still exists. Its website states that it was founded in 1930 by an American, Edward Stephen Harkness, who wanted to use his oil fortune for 'systematic philanthropy'. Of Scottish descent, he responded to appeals from Britain experiencing depression in the 1920s by setting up a Pilgrim Trust to administer initially £20 million for social welfare projects and the preservation of buildings in Britain, e.g. – churches, cathedrals and university buildings. An article by Ken Jones entitled 'Tretower Court and the Brecknock Society' in *Brycheiniog*, (vol. XLII, 2010, pp. 15–17) based on the Sir John Lloyd archive at Brecknock Museum, gives a most interesting account of the negotiations for obtaining funds for the purchase of Tretower Court, including £1,500 from the Pilgrim Trust – a significant amount and no doubt a great encouragement.

¹⁴ These were published 'The Houses of Breconshire' in *Brycheiniog* as follows:

Part I The Builth District, Vol. IX, 1963.

Part II The Hay and Talgarth District, Vol. X, 1964.

Part III The Brecon District, Vol. XI, 1965.

Part IV The Crickhowell District, Vol. XII, 1966–7.

Part V The Defynnog District, Vol. XIII, 1968–9.

Parts VI and VII The Vaynor and Penderyn District, and the Ystradgynlais District, Vol. XVI, 1972.

¹⁵ *Brycheiniog*, Vol. IX, 1963, p. 5.

¹⁶ Rees, W., *South Wales and the Border in the XIV century: an historical map*, Ordnance Survey, 1933.

¹⁷ Smith, P., *Houses of the Welsh Countryside: a study in historical geography*. RCAHMW, 1st edition 1975, 2nd edition 1988.

¹⁸ The location of details at Fig. 4 is as follows: 4a diagonal chimneys at Tretower Court; family crest at Aberhoywe, Llangynidr (photo, Stanley Jones); shaped doorhead on partition door at Wern farm, Cwmdu; fireplace at Pen-y-bryn, Llangattock; mullioned window at Tyn-y-llwyn, Partrishow. 4b fireplace stairs at Penyrheol, Llanbedr; well stairs at Village Farm, Llangattock; door at Hall Farm (Neuadd), Llangenny; partition bench at Pen-y-bryn, Llangattock; pentice supports at Draen, Llanbedr (photo Stanley Jones).

¹⁹ Smith, P., op cit., Map 52, p. 659 and p. 266.

²⁰ *ibid*, p. 267.

²¹ *Brycheiniog*, Vol. XII, 1966, p. 37.

²² see Wiliam, E., *The Welsh cottage*, RCAHMW, 2010.

²³ *Brycheiniog*, Vol. XII, 1966, Pl. VIB.

²⁴ National Library of Wales, Badminton 1 (Manorial 1), no. 214.

²⁵ Among others were Sir John Price of **The Priory**, Brecon (d. 1555), who obtained lands after the dissolution of the monasteries; Dr. William Awbrey (d. 1595) of **Abercynrig**, who was Master of Requests to Elizabeth I. His Inquisition Post Mortem, printed in Lloyd, J. *Historical Memoranda of Breconshire*, 1903, vol. 1. pp 22–30, has details of a considerable number of properties, most near Brecon; and Sir David Williams, Queen's Attorney for South Wales, (*Brycheiniog*, XXV, 1992, see p. 68). He or his son built **Gwernyfed**.

²⁶ Redwood, P., *Breconshire 1540–1640*, unpublished M.Phil. thesis, Cardiff, 1996, p. 151 and p. 168.

²⁷ Selwood, A. M., 'Aberbran Fawr', *Brycheiniog*, XXI, 1984, pp. 21–7.

²⁸ The three houses with gatehouses still in existence were Porthamal, originally owned by the Vaughan family, Tretower Court and Cwrt-y-carw (Porthmawr) in Crickhowell, both originally owned by the Herbert family.

²⁹ Selwood, op. cit. p. 22. A description of wall paintings and other early interior decorations is in Kightly, C. *Living Rooms: interior decoration in Wales, 400–1960*, Cadw, 2005.

³⁰ for example, Bidgood, R., 'A gentleman of the name of Jones', Part 1, *Brycheiniog*, Vol. XXVIII, 1995, Part 2, *Brycheiniog*, Vol. XXIX, 1996.

³¹ *Brycheiniog*, Vol. IX, 1963, pp. 37–9.

³² Bidgood, R., 'The Williams family, non-conformist squires of Trawscoed and Talachddu' *Brycheiniog*, Vol. XXVI, 1993, pp. 119–133.

³³ *Brycheiniog*, Vol. IX, 1963, p. 41.

³⁴ *Brycheiniog*, Vol. IX, 1963, p. 58.

³⁵ Jones, Theophilus, *History of the county of Brecknock*, 1898, p. 281.

³⁶ Suggett, R., *Houses and History in the March of Wales: Radnorshire, 1400–1800*, RCAHMW, 2005, pp. 189–193.

³⁷ Will of Edward ap Lewis, gentleman, of Llanwrthwl, Breconshire dated June 1617. PRO Prob II/129.

³⁸ Marchant site details, www.coflein.gov.uk, 2011.

³⁹ The names of the properties in Llanafan Fawr were: tyr llannerch y ?paske (probably pasg = Easter pasture or fattening pasture); tyr y Rhoes Lloyd (probably rhos – land on the moor); tyr ?clunestirny (?); tyr keven (cefn = ridge) yr Rhowgh (?); tyr cwm Escob (the bishop's land) and tyn y keven (cefn); tyr y Nant Gwyn. (London scribes had difficulty in deciphering or spelling some Welsh language names.) Nant Gwyn is the only one discoverable on modern maps.) My thanks to Peter Powell for help with some of the Welsh words.)

⁴⁰ Suggett, R., op. cit. p. 188.

⁴¹ Peate, op cit.

⁴² Bidgood, R. 'Nantgwyllt, part I', *Radnorshire Society Transactions*, 1995, pp. 33–46.

⁴³ Ibid, Part 2, 1996, p. 22.

⁴⁴ NLW, British Records Association Collection 1940, Welsh deeds, no. 152.

⁴⁵ Grooms, C., *The Giants of Wales*, Mellen Press, 1993.

⁴⁶ Redwood, P and Barnes, J. 'The history of a Breconshire farm: Tyn-y-llwyn' *Brycheiniog* Vol. XXVI, 1993, pp. 53–104.

⁴⁷ Lewes, F., 'Llangwathen and the Lewes family, c. 1570–1868' *Brycheiniog* Vol. XXVIII, 1995, pp. 23–32.

⁴⁸ Suggett, R., op. cit., pp. 276–282.

⁴⁹ Parry, E., 'Old Breconshire Farmhouses, an exhibition at Brecknock Museum, March–April 1998' *Brycheiniog* Vol. XXXI, 1998, pp. 15–17.

⁵⁰ Stevenson, G., and Suggett, R. *Introducing Houses of the Welsh Countryside*, S4C and RCAHMW, 2010.

⁵¹ Dr. Brunskill has published many books on vernacular architecture, including *Traditional Farm Buildings of Britain and their Conservation*, Yale, 2007.

BRECON ISOLATION HOSPITAL

This is the tale of a public institution just outside the town of Brecon, which came and went within a single lifespan. It was well known in its time to people who are still living now in and around Brecon. It still appears – erroneously – on the most recent Ordnance Survey maps. And it is now almost totally forgotten and lost to all except a handful of the old, the curious, a couple of farmers and a small number of dog walkers. It also becomes an illustration of how easy it is to lose a record of people's lives and experiences.

To most people Brecon Hospital refers – exclusively – to the Breconshire War Memorial Hospital in Cerrigochion Road, and the original intention of this article was to write a history of that hospital. To that end, an article was placed in the Brecon and Radnor Express seeking to draw out people's recollections of it. The response was rather underwhelming but did serve to establish contact with Barbara Jones of Pontwilym and with Glyn Owen Lowe of Cantref, formerly of Bronllys and Tal-y-bont who, now in his 90's, has a long association with the health services of Brecon. Can there be anyone else alive who has been a patient in three Brecon hospitals? Whilst, as far as most people are concerned, the War Hospital is the only Brecon Hospital, and it is certainly the only one which they have known, it is actually the sixth such building in or around the town which in the last thousand years has been constructed and used for the care and treatment of people in need.

The first two were the infirmaries of the priory churches of St Nicholas (Christ College) and St John (the present Cathedral). These foundations were dissolved in the late 1530's and it was to be three hundred years before two more buildings were erected to meet health needs.

These were the Infirmary in the Watton, demolished over 10 years ago to allow a new relief road to be created, and the Workhouse in Llanfaes. This latter building has been transformed over the last one hundred and eighty years – seamlessly it would seem – from a perceived Dickensian House of Oppression to a scarcely less dreaded Poor Law Institution, then to a much loved Geriatric Hospital and now most recently to a Boarding House for Christ College.

The fifth in order of construction of the six buildings and the most short-lived was the Fever or Isolation Hospital off the Warren Road, past the new livestock market to the south west of the town.

All that remains now is a lane off the Warren Road – 170 yards or so of muddy track and a flattish area at the edge of a field which looks as though something once stood there but a something which might have been a farm shed.

On the 1923 Ordnance Survey map this is described as a Hospital. In the latest edition the lane, accurately, and the outline of the building or buildings, quite inaccurately, are shown but the word 'Hospital' has been omitted. This is all that remains other than a few memories of the Hospital, limited to a small

group of mostly over 80 who were treated there, to the small number who farmed the land and to the curious.

The Hospital was an end product of the 1893 and 1901 Isolation Hospital Acts which enabled the County Councils to take responsibility for the control of notifiable infectious diseases such as Diphtheria and Scarlet Fever by building and operating Isolation Hospitals.

However, having established that the building actually existed and identified the legislation or at least the legislative climate which caused it to be built, the next task was to find some written record of its existence and usage.

Reorganisations in the public sector in both Health and Local Government and the enormous increase in size of these organisations make the possibility of finding old records extremely unlikely. Powys County Council alone probably generates more documentation in a month now than all the Councils of Brecknockshire did in ten years a century ago. This means that all records systems are most heavily loaded towards recent times.

Furthermore, buildings where records were once kept, such as the Watton Infirmary – may no longer exist, they may be in different hands, such as St David's Hospital, now part of Christ College, or used for completely different purposes, such as Brecon Shire Hall, now a Museum.

However in Llandrindod, Powys County Council has an excellent Archives Department holding, inter alia, most of the minutes of meetings of the Local Government bodies subsumed by Powys when it was established in the 1970's.

The minutes of the old Brecknockshire County Council do contain references to Infectious Diseases and the Council's responsibility for controlling these. This responsibility was recorded in the County Council minutes of January 16 1903 when a letter from Vaynor & Penderyn Rural District Council dated November 17 1902 was noted, inviting Breconshire County Council to join them in providing such a facility at Cefn Coed on the outskirts of Merthyr but within the old county of Brecknockshire.

No action was taken at this time. This was also the County Council's response to a suggestion from the South Wales & Monmouthshire branch of the National Association for the Prevention of Consumption dated January 17 1902 that the Council should concern themselves with combatting that disease by opening a sanatorium. A letter was read to the meeting, its contents minuted faithfully and the Council then moved on to discuss roads.

A trawl through nearly twenty-five years of County Council Minutes 1898 – 1923, indicates quite clearly that the Council's principal concerns were schools and roads. Discussion on Health matters was limited in the earlier years to the construction of the Asylum in the grounds of Chancefield at Talgarth where the prospective patients were referred to, almost interchangeably, as paupers or lunatics; and to the appointment of a Miss Lena Crowther as Joint Inspector of Midwives for Breconshire and Radnorshire. The Health Committee

recommended her appointment in 1909 at a salary of £100 p. a., the committee having been formed in 1906, mainly for the supervision of midwifery services and including local GP's, Dr V.Rees of Lion Street and Dr W.Howells of the Watton and local dignitaries such as Mrs Mayberry of the Priory.

The first indication that the treatment and control of infectious diseases was becoming a priority arose in 1910 with the establishment of a committee charged with establishing the Welsh National Memorial to (the late) King Edward VII. This of course was nearly seventeen years since the Royal Assent was given to the first Isolation Hospitals Act – a reflection on how the process of government has moved from the contemplative, then, to the immediate, now.

By 1913 the County Council was receiving reports of the number of cases of notifiable infectious diseases which had arisen in the previous quarter, but only those brought to the attention of the Medical Officer for the County. How many cases went unreported in the farms in the hills and in the poorer houses of the town because of the difficulty of reaching a doctor or of paying his fees can only be guessed at, but we can quote the following examples for the County:

	<i>4th Quarter 1913</i>	<i>1st Quarter 1914</i>	<i>2nd Quarter 1914</i>
Scarlet Fever	31	29	130
Diphtheria	35	18	21
Enteric Fever	3	0	4
Erysipelas	1	8	2
Tuberculosis	18	24	9

These are small numbers in a total population for the county of 59,879 (1911 Census) with the exception of Scarlet Fever with Ystradgynlais RDC reporting 60 cases which were swamping Pontardawe Hospital.

These were generally bacteriological infections for which, before the age of antibiotics, there was little treatment but which generally were not fatal. An exception was puerperal fever to which new mothers were susceptible. This was considered to have a low risk of infection but a high risk of fatality in such cases. From the list there are, to modern eyes, notable exceptions – the terrors of a generation ago – Polio and Smallpox, and the modern dread – Meningitis, nor are the traditional childhood illness – Measles, Mumps, Chickenpox, Rubella and Whooping Cough – on the list.

In the 1910's, however, other than being notified of infectious conditions, the County Council does not appear to have done very much. Indeed it was routinely rebuked by the Welsh National Memorial Association for the Treatment of Tuberculosis for its 'repeated refusals to execute an agreement with the Association' (County Council minutes).

There was greater interest in discussing the treatment of Venereal Diseases for which the County Council was required 'in pursuance of Public Health Acts 1875-1913' 'to prepare a scheme and make arrangements for the treatment and prevention of the spread . . .'. Here again the County Council proved itself remarkably adept in avoiding the need for direct action by inquiring of the neighbouring counties of Glamorgan and Monmouthshire if treatment might be available at a reasonable price.

Yet again in October 1917 the Association for the Treatment of TB intimated that 'no treatment to patients from Brecon would be available unless the Council accepted and came into a scheme of association'. The Council could point rather irrelevantly to its letter to the Army Council asking that soldiers suffering from TB should not be discharged.

Whilst the County Council showed interest, but no greater urgency, on the subject of infectious diseases, others did – the Clerk to the Ystradgynlais RDC writing to the County Council stressing 'the urgent need to provide an isolation hospital'.

This presents an interesting question because, over the next four years, whilst there is no record in the County Council minutes of any action being taken, despite talking of the need for such a facility, the 1923 Ordnance Survey map of Brecon and its surrounds shows the Isolation Hospital off the Warren Road.

This Hospital consisted of three long low single storey huts in a half-acre paddock on land owned by the Garnons Williams of Abercamlais estate.

That the Hospital existed is in no doubt. There are still people in Brecon who remember being taken there to recover from Scarlet Fever and Diphtheria.

We know the buildings – the three huts – were cold, the only heating being a stove, and we can assume that one hut was used for children, but the layout and use of the other huts is beyond recall. Was one for men and one for women or was one used and divided up for all adults and the other used for storage, administration, staff or in emergency either for particularly severe cases or in times of high demand such as a scarlet fever epidemic?

We must assume that for a child to be taken away from the family home in the Doctor's car and to be put in what seemed like a shed at the end of a track must have been an alarming experience. No visitors were allowed, but the actual memory is not of fear, but of cold and of not having enough to eat.

We know that the nursing was provided by a freelance nurse who was on occasion dragooned into leaving her normal round to attend patients in the Warren Road with the threat that the local Doctors would otherwise cease referring patients to her, and we know that a cook was employed on an 'as and when' basis to prepare meals on the premises.

All this is either known or can be safely assumed but it did not alter the fact that after reading a quarter of a century's worth of Council minutes complete with references to infectious diseases and the need to do something about these, there was absolutely no record of any action to build a hospital being taken.

The Minute books of Brecon Borough Council likewise contained no reference to anybody actually doing anything, but, thanks to the diligence of Powys Archives, an entirely different set of minute books were produced for Brecon Urban District Council under which banner the Borough Council also sat.

It is already difficult to recall now the various quirks of local government which the Heath government eliminated in the 1970's, but the idea of the same group of people solemnly meeting alternatively as Brecon Borough Council and then as Brecon UDC rates quite highly in the anomaly stakes – particularly as the business transacted from discussing highways to sending condolences to Queen Victoria on the death of the Duke of Saxe Coburg Gotha often mirrored exactly the doings of the Council Council.

The UDC minutes contained, for the first time in this exercise, hard fact – that on February 11 1902, the Borough Council, meeting as the Brecon Urban District Council, received a deputation from Brecknock Rural District Council proposing that the two councils 'should cooperate in the establishment of an Isolation Hospital'. The UDC resolved that it would cooperate, each council contributing to the costs of building and maintaining the hospital in proportion to its rateable value, each council paying for its own patients and each council having equal voting powers.

In January 1903 it was minuted that a site beyond the Slwch Rifle Range be considered and then later that an agreement with the Rev. Garnons Williams was sealed in January 1904 for the lease of the land on which an Infectious Diseases Hospital would be built and actually was built. This corroborates the evidence of the farmer who farmed the land around and recalls the appearance of the huts – galvanised iron shells around a timber frame – and who has a perfect recollection of the 1952 toilet, the line of the mains water supply – drawn from the Brecon town supply, the sewage system and the location of the boiler house. From family knowledge, he believes the buildings were constructed in 1902 and survived into the 1960's when, no longer in use, these were destroyed by fire – the work of vandals.

We also know from his recollection that the site was also considered for a TB Sanatorium in the early years of the twentieth century but that Pontywal at Bronllys was preferred because it had lower rainfall and because Pontywal House was available as staff accommodation, and also since the buildings off the Warren Road were afterwards used, when not required as a hospital, for Council tenants for whom presumably the new toilet was built in 1952. That it had ceased to be used for health purposes by this date is confirmed by the knowledge that it was not transferred to the newly established NHS in 1948 at the same time as all other hospitals and most if not all Poor Law Institutions.

We also know that by the time of the arrival in practice in Brecon of Dr Ken Price in 1959 and Dr Cavenagh in 1960, not only had the buildings long ceased to be used for patients but also that the memory of such use was no longer fresh.

We can only have glimpses of what went on in between other than personal accounts.

At the time when patients were being admitted to the Isolation Hospital, there were two medical practices in Brecon – in Lion Street and in Alexandra Road. These over time merged into a single Practice based in Ruperra House in Brecon and subsequently in Tŷ Henri Vaughan alongside the River Usk. However, any long lost records in the Surgery of treatment of patients in the buildings off the Warren Road, remain long lost.

Instead we must rely on the Minutes of the District Councils, which record the formal agreement reached in May 1920 for the RDC to use ‘their’ – referring to the Borough – Isolation Hospital, from which we may assume that the Hospital was owned by the Borough but operated by the Borough acting as the UDC and equally by the RDC in the Byzantine world of local government, whilst all the time, the County Council, a quarter of a mile away, was debating its responsibilities for managing and controlling infectious diseases.

The May 1920 agreement was renewed for seven years in April 1921 and duly signed in July 1921.

From time to time in the 1920’s, the RDC noted usage of the Hospital in its minutes: on July 7 1924 there was reference to two cases of Diphtheria from Talybont, one a child – not named but quite possibly Glyn Owen Lowe – and the other the assistant mistress at Talybont School, where he was a pupil.

In the same year there was an attempt to call a conference of all the Sanitary Authorities in the county to consider the adequacy of Hospital provision though with what result is unknown. In 1927 a smallpox scare gave rise to a comment in the RDC minutes of November 18 that the Council was “not satisfied” that “reasonable provision” was being made for such eventualities. The following year the agreement between the UDC and the RDC was again renewed.

Throughout the 1930’s references to the Isolation Hospital become more frequent and more detailed. The Hospital was opened in 1932 from January 10 to February 6 for a case of Diphtheria and approval was given on August 18 1932 to employ two nurses to tend to patients admitted with Scarlet Fever, including two of the five children of Harries the Baker from Talybont.

The records show that, after this, the Hospital was again clear of patients and could be closed on October 8 1932. In March 1934 the Hospital was opened for four cases of Scarlet Fever from Talachddu and this time the cost was quoted for the nine weeks in which the Hospital was open – of £54-4s-3d.

The following year a cost was given of £300-2s-2d for opening the hospital for about six weeks for ten patients with diphtheria, five from each of the contributing councils. Although the earlier record of notifiable diseases included illnesses such as puerperal fever and enteric fever as well as pulmonary TB, it is noticeable that in the thirties the only conditions referred to are diphtheria and scarlet fever, primarily the former. It is also apparent that these cases were

brought to the 'present temporary buildings' of the Isolation Hospital and not to the newly opened and up to date Breconshire War Memorial Hospital. If it is possible to draw conclusions from such little data, it would be that fear of infection was widespread but that there was a growing sense that, in a 1930's phrase, 'something must be done'.

By 1936 there was indeed a move among the various councils – nine in all – of Breconshire to build a single new facility available for patients from across the county with the first option being considered to build on an enlargement of the existing Warren Road site. Discussion of this proposal appears in the minutes of the Isolation Hospital Committee of the Borough Council in 1938 concerning the purchase or lease of an additional $5\frac{3}{4}$ acres to extend the Hospital – which would have made the site ten times greater. Although the council minutes contained reference to the difficulties with both the water and electricity supply to the Warren Road site, discussion of this scheme centred on the farmer's claim for compensation. This covered ploughing for his winter 1936 root crop (£5-6s-8d), for the loss of that root crop (£21-6s-8d), for extra labour for clearing land left fallow in the summer of 1936 (£10-13s-4d), for the loss of the 1937 oat crop (£10-13s-4d) and for losses arising for the failure to carry out a 4 course system (£20). Coupled with the rent payable on the land of £8, the farmer claimed £76 and was offered £20.

As the estate sought £950 to £1000 for the land and refused an offer of £800, the Borough Council looked elsewhere and bought 4.378 acres at Cwmfaldau Farm south of the town for £950, the site closer to the town and near the mains water supply to the town presenting fewer difficulties. The estimated cost of a 24 bed hospital on this site was £22k and the work was put out to tender in March 1939, by when, however, there were other priorities and the project was first reduced to 12 beds and then postponed altogether. What happened to the Warren Road Hospital becomes increasingly unclear.

In January 1941 patients from Brecon RDC were being sent to Merthyr and in March of that year to Llandeilo. The minutes of the RDC record this but not what was happening at the Isolation Hospital.

By 1948 when the NHS took over Britain's Hospitals, the War Memorial Hospital in Cerrigcochion Road and the Poor Law Institute in Llanfaes were absorbed but the buildings in the Warren Road were not included in the new service. And the records show that in 1949-50 the land at Cwmfaldau Farm was sold back for £650, at a loss of £300, nothing having been done to use the site to build an isolation unit, presumably because by then antibiotics had rendered such a facility obsolete, there being no longer any need to keep people suffering from infectious conditions apart from the rest of the community.

The buildings off the Warren Road were – by common report – used first for housing Prisoners of War sent to work on the land and then for emergency accommodation for Council tenants. Until finally at some point in the 1950's,

virtually undetected, these ceased to be used at all, until time, negligence and eventually vandalism brought about their complete destruction. The land returned to the Abercamlais estate and the Ordnance Survey removed the word 'hospital' from the maps.

But it is worth remembering that even in those benighted days before the introduction of the much acclaimed 'free at the point of use' National Health Service, there was a recognition of the need to address issues of Public Health: that technical advances in the field of pharmacology did as much to improve and save lives as did all politically driven initiatives and to spare a thought for those who were bundled unceremoniously into waiting Doctors' cars and taken to a Spartan shelter where not all were as fortunate as Glyn Owen Lowe to see their great grand daughters enjoy happier prospects.

MICHAEL JONES

Notes

This article is based primarily on research gleaned from the Minute books of local government bodies: these are kept in the archives of Powys County Council in Llandrindod. These various authorities are Brecknockshire County Council, Brecon Town Council, Brecon Urban District Council and Brecon Rural District Council. However, the article was initially inspired by the Doctors Snow, who insisted that an Isolation or Fever Hospital had existed in the early part of the twentieth century on the outskirts of the town, even though there were few traces, fewer records and only isolated memories of this. An article in the *Brecon & Radnor* led to Glyn Owen Lowe of Cantref and to Barbara Jones of Beacons Park, both of who have clear recollections of the Hospital to which they had been admitted as children, the former with suspected diphtheria and the latter with scarlet fever. Their invaluable help is gratefully acknowledged.

As no photographs of the Hospital could be located, the description of the buildings comes from David Evans of Llanddew whose family farmed the surrounding land. His assistance was equally invaluable. Doctor A. J. M. Cavenagh provided much essential medical background and support, and, together with Mrs Margaret Price, was able to confirm that the Hospital was long gone before he or Doctor Ken Price started practising in Brecon at the start of the 1960's. Finally Sue Brook of Cantref read the article and performed the role of sub editor.

SIR JOHN PRYCE AND THE 'CUNNING WOMAN':
A STRANGE AND CAUTIONARY TALE

By the standards of any age Sir John Pryce of Newtown was a lucky man. Of an ancient and distinguished family, the descendant of princes and powerful magnates, he had succeeded his father as the fifth baronet in 1720 when he was only twelve years old. It was a noble patrimony. From the panelled gallery of Newtown Hall he could look out over his splendid oak-wooded park where the deer grazed in the dappled sunlight and contemplate the several thousand acres of his estate. Running up and down the Severn Valley his property included rich farms centred upon fine timber-framed houses interspersed with productive woodlands of oak, chestnut and ash. Amidst these agreeable acres lay corn and woollen mills, cottages and smithies and a substantial amount of real estate in Newtown itself. Add to all this the various Pryce properties accumulated over the centuries in Carmarthenshire and Cardiganshire and Sir John's inheritance seemed a fair one indeed. True, there were the mortgages which he had had to raise to secure the portions of four younger brothers and sisters, but mortgages were long term affairs and since the annual interest bore only modestly upon estate rental they were of little immediate consequence.¹

In 1731 Pryce had married Elizabeth, daughter of the Carmarthenshire landowner Sir Thomas Powell, and over the next four years she bore him a son and two daughters. It was a happy and contented marriage. Pryce and his wife shared a love of horseflesh and hunting, they worked together on various charitable and religious enterprises in and around Newtown and entertained both the local gentry and their farming tenants as social custom demanded. There seemed to Pryce no reason why their life together should not continue in this quiet and useful vein until disaster struck and Elizabeth died in childbirth in the spring of 1736.²

As Sir John Pryce grieved, so he reflected. He was a young and vigorous man, he had three young children and however fond he may have been of his first wife, the former needed a mother, Newtown Hall needed a chatelaine and besides, he needed a lover. Not one to let the grass grow for too long beneath his feet Sir John cast about for a suitable candidate. The halls and mansions of the local gentry seemed to have little to offer, while all but the most determined spinsters of his wider acquaintance had long been married off. But the baronet remained undeterred. Returning late one autumn afternoon after a day's hunting in the Berriew district he was overtaken by a sharp rainstorm and as he sheltered beneath the overhanging branches of a venerable oak tree he spotted a maiden of "incomparable beauty and just proportion".³ This was Mary, the twenty two year old daughter of John Harries, a Berriew farmer. Sir John was captivated with the Junoesque Mary and after a little talking, a little walking and a little loving, they were living in Newtown Hall early in 1737. Mary no doubt relished her new position in life while John Harries probably enjoyed the novel status of being father-

in-law to a gentleman of ample property. But the loose tongues of the gossips of Newtown wagged in calumnious chorus. In the narrow alleyways beside the Severn, in the smoky rooms of inns and the prim vestibules of meeting-houses the seeds of doubt were sown. Were the couple really married, or was the farmer's daughter nothing more than the baronet's mistress? As ever the tittle-tattle was great fun and speculation as to the status of things in the Hall provided hours of entertainment for the locals. But the innuendos and aspersiones preyed upon Mary's mind and Sir John was convinced that when she died in 1739, her heart had been broken by the wagging of beldam's tongues.

Sir John was utterly distraught and he wept freely as he held Mary's two infant children in his arms. Never the most stable of men, he turned for comfort to his old friend William Fenton, the Newtown curate, by this time the reluctant occupier of his own deathbed. In a letter to Fenton he suggested that when the curate arrived in Heaven he might be able to persuade Mary to seek divine permission to appear before her grieving husband. With a few days remaining in this world, the unhappy Fenton could probably have done without this curious request from the baronet and, for that matter, without the bottle of mint-water which accompanied the letter. But Pryce was desperate to get the answer to various vexing questions. The inscription on the monument to Mary, originally in the old church at Newtown before its removal to the new parish church, refers to her humility and the fact that "The advancement of her Fortunes was not attended with the least exaltation of her Mind". It also darkly hints at the "Clouds of Infamy wch had been cast upon her Character by Envious and Malicious persons". Pryce needed urgently to know who had wronged his beloved Mary and, as he wrote to the dying Fenton, "put me into a proper method of vindicating these wrongs which robbed her of her life and me of all my happiness in this world".⁴

But whether or not Fenton got to Heaven, Mary appeared to Pryce or the scandalmongers of Newtown got their comeuppance remains an open question. In any event, within two years of Mary's death Sir John Pryce had turned his attention elsewhere. For some time he had been in hot pursuit of the charms of Eleanor, the widow of Roger Jones of Buckland in Breconshire and he married for the third time in the last month of 1741. The courtship must, to say the least, have been a strange one, since if Thomas Pennant is to be believed, Sir John kept the embalmed bodies of his two former wives beside his great four-poster in Newtown Hall.⁵ One imagines that Eleanor may have felt more than a little queasy at the prospect of sharing a bed with a man who already enjoyed the company of two recently-deceased corpses. It seems though, that she managed to persuade the baronet to put the other ladies beneath the earth where they belonged. She then married Sir John and the couple settled at Buckland, leaving Newtown Hall in the hands of Sir John's son by his first wife.⁶

The next few years passed happily by with Eleanor supervising the raising of the Pryce children and the baronet himself going about his charitable work and busying

himself with the affairs of local administration. It was an agreeable and comfortable way of life and the years slipped by quietly and uneventfully. Sir John's debts may have accumulated as his waist expanded, but debts could always be discharged and, in any case, Eleanor's fortune provided a fortuitous cushion against financial embarrassment. But by the summer of 1748 all was not well with the baronet's lady and by mid-November she had taken to her bed with an unspecific but dangerous illness. By the end of the month she was dead.

As Dame Eleanor languished in Breconshire, an old lady in a plain dress, flannel waistcoat and clogs warmed herself by the fireside of her cottage in Coppenhall, Cheshire. Described elsewhere as "an old, shrivelled creature . . . in a most dirty attire and her petticoats not reaching above halfway down her legs", this was Bridget Bostock, a "cunning woman", the White Witch of Coppenhall.⁷ Single and uneducated, Bridget became celebrated throughout the north-west of England for her astonishing healing powers. She could, it seems, cure virtually everything from blindness, deafness and lameness to hysteria, leprosy and cancer, although she drew the line at the "French Disease" and venereal conditions in general.⁸ Refusing any money for her services, she cured by applying her fasting spittle to the diseased or malfunctioning part of the body and earnestly praying with her patient who was urged to be steadfast in his or her belief in the Christian message.⁹ Fasting spittle, or the first spittle of the day was believed to be particularly effective, so much so that even the great John Wesley announced that there was "no room to doubt" the old lady's curative powers.¹⁰ Spitting on an empty stomach can be an exhausting business and since, as Pennant reckoned, Bridget "kept her salivary glands in full employ", she often became very faint as the day wore on. But the more she spat and prayed, the more far-flung became her celebrity and by the mid-summer of 1748 hundreds of folk daily were flocking to her door. Men, women and children of all ranks and conditions and of the whole spectrum of physical and mental maladies headed for Coppenhall buoyed up by hope, if not expectation.

As ever, the urban sophisticates scoffed and sneered. The correspondent to the *Gentleman's Magazine* wrote of "the ignorant vulgar" who would be convinced of their folly by time and experience.¹¹ A local vicar, suspicious of all "enthusiasms," reckoned that as far as the more affluent were concerned, many were probably cured of their real or imaginary ills by getting off their backsides and travelling to Coppenhall. "A gentle walk or an easy ride, at a fine season of the year, might greatly relieve some who, perhaps for a long time before, had used no such exercise".¹² But as the critics smirked the old lady applied her magic, asking little from her votaries save that they believed in the message of the Gospels and the intercessionary powers of Jesus.

Whether he read of her endeavours in the *Gentleman's Magazine* or was told of her apparent powers by a friend, Sir John Pryce was deeply moved by the tales from rural Cheshire. His wife was dead. Bridget Bostock could allegedly work miracles. Was it conceivably possible that she might even be able to work the

ultimate miracle and to intercede with the Divine power for the restoration of Dame Elizabeth's life? Distracted, distraught and crazy with grief, he hoped against hope as he wrote to Mrs Bostock "near Whitchurch, Shropshire". The letter may eventually have reached Coppenhall and found its way into the hands of some literate villager who may or may not have read out its contents to the old lady. Thence the original version of the unhappy baronet's heartfelt appeal was copied several times and in 1749 it appeared in the London magazine *Old England* whose editor claimed that it had been ". . . put into my hands by a Gentleman who vouches for its Genuineness."¹³ Sometime later a rather garbled version was printed in Pennant's *Tours*, probably based on a copy sent to the author by Arthur Blayney of Gregynog, near Newtown.¹⁴ Other bowdlerised versions turned up in the *Monthly Magazine* in 1815, and the *Mirror of Literature, Amusement and Instruction* of 1827, while fuller and more accurate copies were printed in *Archaeologia Cambrensis* in 1854 and W.H. Challinor's 1948 pamphlet on the life of Bridget Bostock.¹⁵ The various versions were offered to an "enlightened" readership as an example of "human credulity" and as illustrations of how an educated man could ". . . give up on his Judgment" and become prey to a belief in absurdities "from the Melancholy Contemplation of his Loss working upon a disordered Imagination".

I have recently come across a further copy of Pryce's letter among the papers of Mrs Anne Lloyd-Williams, the great grand-daughter of William Basil Tickell Jones, of Gwynfryn, Ceredigion, Bishop of St David's between 1874 and 1897.¹⁶ The letter lay seemingly at random amidst a collection of miscellaneous material comprising diaries, family letters, enclosure papers and documents relating to the Cardiganshire Militia and the Bishopric of St David's.¹⁷ That the letter set out below is a copy is clear from a simple comparison of the appended signature with that on Pryce's 1761 will. How it found its way to an iron-bound trunk in rural Ceredigion is something of a mystery, although as I will show later the provisions of Pryce's will may offer some clues.

Madam,

Being very well informed by very credible people both private and public that you have done several wonderful cures even when Physicians have failed & that you do it by the force and efficacy of your prayers mostly if not altogether the outward means you use being generally supposed to be inadequate to the Effects produced, I cannot but look upon such operations to be miraculous & if so why may not an infinitely good & gracious God enable you to raise the Dead as well as to heal the Sick, give sight to the Blind & hearing to the Deaf, for since he is pleased to hear your prayers in some cases so beneficial to mankind, there's the same reason to expect it in others & consequently in that I have particularly mentioned, namely raising up the Dead.

Now as I have lost a Wife whom I most dearly loved, my Children one of the best of Stepmothers, all her near Relations a friend whom they greatly esteemed, and the Poor a charitable benefactress, I intreat you for God Almighty's sake that you wou'd be so good as to come here if your actual presence is absolutely requisite or if not that you will

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offer up your prayers to the throne of Grace on my behalf that God wou'd graciously vouchsafe to raise up my dear wife Dame Eleanor Pryce from the Dead – this is one of the greatest acts of charity you can do for my heart is ready to break with grief at the consideration of the great loss – this wou'd be doing myself & all her Relations & friends such an extraordinary kindness as wou'd necessarily engage our daily prayers for your preservation as the best gratuity I cou'd make you for so great a benefit – 'tho were any other, compatible with the nature of the thing – and durst we offer & you accept it, we shou'd think nothing too much to the utmost of our abilities & I wish that the bare mention of it is not offensive both to God & you.

If your immediate presence is indispensably necessary pray let me know by return of the Post that I may send a Coach & Six & Servants to attend you here with orders to defray your expences (sic) in a manner most suitable to your own desires – If your prayers will be as effectual at the distance your (sic) from me, pray signify the same in a letter directed by way of London to good Madam

Your unfortunate afflicted petitioner & hble Servt.

John Pryce

Buckland, 1st Dec. 1748

(Vide Postscript)

PS Pray direct your Letter to John Pryce Bart. At Buckland in Brecknocksh. South Wales. God Almighty prosper this undertaking & others intended for the Benefit of mankind & may He long continue such an useful person upon Earth & afterwards crown you with Eternal Glory in the Kingdom of Heaven thro' Jesus Christ. Amen.

Although local legend has it that Mrs Bostock visited Breconshire and attempted to revive Dame Eleanor, there is no evidence that she ventured out of Coppenhall to ply her skills or even that she ever received Pryce's letter. If it *had* reached Coppenhall and its message *had* been conveyed to the recipient, it is not difficult to imagine a villager then passing the original to some busybody hoping to foment mischief at the unfortunate Pryce's expense. Hence the several copies which appear to have been made.

Sir John Pryce of Newtown and Buckland finally went to his own reward in 1761 by which time his financial affairs were in a rather poor way. Outlying family properties in Carmarthenshire and Cardiganshire had been sold to defray debts, while the central Newtown estate was burdened with a mortgage of £20,000.¹⁸ Profligacy may have played a significant part in the decline of Pryce's fortunes, while his regular lengthy absences in Pembrokeshire in pursuit of passion probably did little to further the efficient management of his patrimony. As he slipped into middle age, Sir John had forgotten his earlier loves and lamented wives and had fallen under the spell of one Mary Harries of Haverfordwest. Mentioned in the baronet's will as “. . . the Dearest Object of my Lawful and best and Purest Affection, most dear and entirely beloved Intended wife, Margaret Harries”, the lady had clearly snared her man. But however genuine her feelings for Pryce may have been, a cynic would probably argue that the Grim Reaper did her a signal

favour by carrying off a man whose matrimonial habits seemed eccentric at the very least.

Sir John Pryce's will, which may explain in part why a copy of his letter to Bridget Bostock came to be among a collection of papers in Cardiganshire concerned substantially with a Bishop of St David's, is itself an eccentric document.¹⁹ Drawn up on 7 November 1761 its customary preamble is followed by a request for interment in the cathedral of St David's to the accompaniment of a burial service composed by William Croft, former organist at the cathedral. The choristers of St David's would then receive one guinea each and "my worthy friend" Matthew Phillips, cathedral organist, 10 guineas. John Prothero of Haverfordwest "an infant" (and probably an illegitimate son) was bequeathed £100 of which the interest was firstly to be applied to his maintenance and Christian education and afterwards to his "apprenticeship at sea service". The remainder of Pryce's real and personal estate, leaving aside gifts to the cathedral and modest bequests to his daughters, was left to his fiancée, Margaret Harries. On the face of it, his son John Powell Pryce, was disinherited and Margaret fortuitously gained a substantial estate and the associated kudos. But the lady was no fool. Reviewing the condition of Pryce's finances, the £20,000 mortgage and the bewildering mass of bond debts, she renounced probate in favour of the baronet's son and daughters who duly inherited the bulk of the property.

At this point Margaret Harries disappears from the tale. Meanwhile the executors of Sir John's will chose to ignore most of its conditions. Despite his earnest wish to be buried in St David's, he was laid to rest in the churchyard of Haverfordwest. Various minor bequests were not discharged, while the most generous gift of an organ to the cathedral was for one reason or another declined by the Dean and Chapter. This instrument "which, at the first erecting thereof I dedicated, consecrated and appropriated by solemn prayer to Almighty God to be employed solely in his Sacred Worship" had originally been installed in Newtown Church before being removed to Buckland in 1745.²⁰ From the description in the will it was a fine instrument with 1004 pipes, 18 stops and a case embellished with a rococo riot of ornamentation; of foliage, angels, cherubim and fluted columns in glorious confusion. But the Dean and Chapter didn't want it. Nor were they interested in the choir surplices, tuning equipment and heavy oak boxes of printed and manuscript church music offered by Sir John for the use of the cathedral. They probably had good reasons for rejecting these bequests, but it strikes one as somehow churlish that they should have done so.²¹

Indifference to the last wishes of the fifth Pryce baronet of Newtown seems to have been the prelude to a series of misfortunes which eventually brought to an end an ancient family claiming descent from the founder of one of the Four Royal Tribes of Wales. Whatever his father's intentions may have been, the Newtown estate came into the life tenancy of John Powell Pryce as sixth baronet. Although he had lost his sight when his young wife had attempted to treat a minor eye

condition with acid, the new baronet was an indefatigable hunter. He apparently managed to take his gates and fences at full pelt while being led on a long rein by his faithful servant Thomas Hughes who must have been a skilled rider besides being a rather brave man.²² Unfortunately, like so many of those whose enthusiasm for horseflesh exceeds the depth of their pockets, he ended up with serious debts which could not be discharged from estate income. As debt piled upon debt and his creditors started to close in, Pryce thought of fleeing the country. But he did not act quickly enough and in 1772 he was arrested and lodged in the King's Bench prison where he died four years later, leaving his wife a single shilling in his will. The latter, who had shared her husband's imprisonment, returned his body to Newtown for burial before creeping away to die in poverty and obscurity in London.

Within a few years the bulk of the Newtown estate was sold to cover outstanding bills and bond debts. But even then the sad litany of the failure of an ancient line was not quite complete. Sir John Powell Pryce and his wife had had a son, Edward Manley Pryce, who inherited his father's title as seventh baronet. An officer in the Guards, Sir Edward Manley Pryce pursued the well-worn trail of profligacy with its all too familiar result of debt accumulation. Once again the creditors advanced for the kill, but not before Pryce managed to go to ground somewhere in the Berkshire countryside. After some months of drifting and increasing destitution, he eventually died of starvation, his wracked and emaciated body turning up in a field near Pangbourne in the midsummer of 1791. Since he had no money about his person his body remained unburied for some weeks before a group of local well-wishers laid him to rest in the Pangbourne churchyard. Prominent for centuries in the affairs of Montgomeryshire and Wales, the Pryce family of Newtown was no more.

RICHARD MOORE-COLYER

Notes

¹ M. Humphries, *The Crisis of Community: Montgomeryshire, 1680–1815*, Cardiff, University of Wales Press, 1996, p. 114.

² B. B. Richards, *History of Newtown*, 1914, p. 20.

³ R. Williams, “Montgomeryshire Worthies”, *Montgomeryshire Collections*, XVI, 1883, p. 39.

⁴ J. Rhys (ed), *Pennant: Tours in Wales* III, 1883, pp. 179–180.

⁵ Pryce’s will refers to John Powell Pryce as occupying Newtown Hall.

⁶ C. Simon, “From Generalism to Speciality: A Short History of General Practice”, *InnovAIT*, 2, 2009, p. 2; O. Davies, “Newspapers and the Popular Belief in Witchcraft and Magic in the Modern Period”, *Journal of British Studies*, 37(2), 1998, pp. 139–165.

⁷ See her entry in D. N. B. and O. Davies, “Charms and Charming in England and Wales from the Eighteenth to the Twentieth Century”, *Folklore*, 109, 1998, pp. 41–52.

⁸ The magical power of spittle had been long known in folk medicine. Pliny had recommended early morning spittle as a treatment for ophthalmia, while Jesus himself spat as he healed the deaf man beside the Sea of Galilee (Mark 7; 32–36). To spit three times offered protection against the spell of a malicious witch. Within the last decade I have witnessed the practice of spitting on coins as a means of sealing a bargain and (presumably) negating any possible evil linked to those coins.

⁹ I. Opie and M. Tatum (eds), *A Dictionary of Superstitions*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1996.

¹⁰ *Gentleman’s Magazine*, September, 1748, pp. 113–4.

¹¹ W. H. Challanor, *Bridget Bostock: the White Witch of Coppenhall*, Crewe, 1948.

¹² *Old England*, 259, April 15, 1749.

¹³ National Library of Wales Ms. 12712.

¹⁴ *Monthly Magazine*, 39, 1815; *The Mirror of Literature, Amusement and Instruction*, 10, 1827; *Archaeologia Cambrensis*, Ser 2, 1854, pp. 108–9.

¹⁵ I have inspected these papers at the request of my friend Miss Sarah Lloyd-Williams of Nebo, Ceredigion.

¹⁶ Some of the papers complement material in the Gwynfryn archive in the National Library of Wales.

¹⁷ Humphreys, p. 114.

¹⁸ NLW wills; SD /1761/29.

¹⁹ R. Williams, “Montgomeryshire Worthies”, *Montgomeryshire Collections*, XVI, 1863, p. 43.

²⁰ The eventual fate of the organ remains a mystery.

²¹ Richards, op cit., pp. 24–5.

²² *Dictionary of Welsh Biography*, Oxford, Blackwell, 1959.

A CHAPTER ON THE CHURCHES AND CHAPELS IN THE PARISH OF GLASBURY

Introduction¹

This chapter will be dealing with local churches and chapels principally as buildings; but a church or chapel is more than an empty shell – it is a congregation of people who gather together in common worship, whether in prayer, praise and thanksgiving or in listening to the Word of God preached from the pulpit. At the beginning of the twenty-first century throughout the country many are in decline with waning numbers and ageing congregations. A hundred years ago the situation was very different: churches and chapels were all well attended, and each played an important role in the life of its community. J. W. Hobbs, reminiscing of his years as station booking clerk at Three Cocks (1902–1905),² wrote that there were good congregations at St Peter’s church, ‘chiefly the gentry, retired people, visitors at the Hotel, and some of the large farmers. Most of the working classes were chapel, except those employed at Gwernfyed or Tregoeed. The strongest chapel was the Baptist at Glasbury, which was always full on Sunday nights, and often packed. Baptisms used to take place about once a year in the River Wye, which runs alongside the chapel. The chapel was the chief source of social entertainment. During the winter months was held what was called a Christian Union. The two Glasbury chapels and Felindre combined and held two entertainments in each chapel every winter. These always had to be arranged for the week of the full moon, so as to have moonlight on the way home. Our Three Cocks choir and band used to attend frequently. The chapel anniversaries were great events, both children and adults would take part and there were recitations and dialogues, solos, duets and quartettes. There were also frequent tea parties, lectures, Christian Endeavour and Prayer meetings, and concerts, but only on rare occasions were outside artistes engaged; we made our own amusements. Sometimes we would go farther afield, to Penrhol or Maesyronen chapels or All Saints church, always on foot. We were not afraid of walking in those days’.

Glasbury Church: SS Cynidr & Peter³

(A) *The Medieval Church*

The earliest church in the parish of Glasbury was that of St Cynidr, probably founded by the early sixth century saint, whom tradition says was buried here.⁴ Its precise site is uncertain; in all likelihood it lay in the valley, near or beneath the remains of the Norman church that replaced it.⁵ With the Norman Conquest, the manor of Glasbury came into the hands of Bernard de Newmarch, who (with thought for his soul’s salvation) in 1088 presented it to God, to St Peter and to the abbot and monks of Gloucester. His heirs confirmed the grant of the manor, which included the church of St Cynidr with all its appurtenances. In 1144 the monks disposed of the manor to Walter de Clifford in exchange for a manor in



Fig. 1 Great flood of 3rd-4th December 1960. View overlooking St Peter's church (1838) on the 1665 site, high above the flood plain. Inset: the triangular platform on which the Norman church once stood, completely encircled by floodwater similar to the flood that washed away much of the churchyard and damaged the tower three hundred years earlier. Photographs: Marion Griffiths

Gloucestershire; however, they retained Glasbury church together with its chapels, land and appurtenances.⁶ At some date the church was rebuilt in stone, perhaps during the massive programme of church building that occurred in the twelfth century, or following the ravages of Llywellyn ap Iowerth in 1231; it may then have been rededicated to St Peter. The revolt of Owain Glyndŵr at the beginning of the fifteenth century necessitated substantial repairs or a further rebuilding.⁷

On 2nd January 1540, the monastery of St Peter's at Gloucester was suppressed and its privileges transferred to the King, who conferred the living of Glasbury upon the Bishop of Gloucester (patronage passing to the Bishop of St David's in the nineteenth century). Then, in 1545 Henry VIII sought new sources of revenue to finance his wars against France and Scotland; he determined upon the dissolution of chantries and similar institutions, but died before the act could be implemented. In 1547 under Edward VI a more comprehensive act was passed, the dissolution being justified on the grounds that 'a great part of the Superstition and Errors in Christian Religion hath been brought into the minds of men by reason of the ignorance of their very true and perfect salvation, through the death of Jesus Christ, and by devising and phantasing vain opinions of Purgatory and Masses satisfactory,

to be done for them which be departed'. The chantry at Glasbury was reported as being called 'The Stoke'; it was 'Founded to Fynde a Prest & he to have for his Salary by yere lvs to be taken out of the Stoke of mony which amonith to the summa of xiiij^{li} xv^s', and 'Ys a service to be done within the said parish church'.⁸

During the Commonwealth period many clergy were ejected from their livings, among them Alexander Griffith of Glasbury.⁹ However, with the Restoration of the monarchy in 1660 the Puritan nominee was in turn ejected and the legal incumbent returned to his parish.¹⁰ Around this time the church was severely damaged by unusually high and violent floods, and was 'in a most im'inent & inevitable danger to be utterlie demolished & destroyed (the one halfe of the steeple being alreadie undermined & fallen into the river, the churchyard (well nigh) to the very Church door, consumed & washed away, the graves opened, & the bones carryed away)'. Griffith wrote a petition signed by all the principal parishioners, requesting the Bishop of St David's 'in this suddayne & unexpected exigency to impower & co'mand the Church Wardens of s'd parish to take some speedie & im'ediate course to draw down the rest of the s'd Church (itt being impossible to be theare p'served). That the materials may be secured & kept safe towards the building of another'. Unless speedy action were taken, 'all the materialls of the s'd Church, as timber, iron barrs, windowes, freestones, lofts, seates & doores, w'ch amounteth to a great sum of money' would be 'utterlie lost & taken away, the next or second flood, by the violence of the s'd river'.¹¹ Permission was granted and the materials were salvaged, leaving only a depression in the ground to mark the original line of the walls.

On the spur of land at the present confluence of the rivers Wye and Llynfi, the outline of the medieval church (slightly smaller than neighbouring churches at Llowes and Clyro) is clearly visible at the northwest corner of a large triangular mound. The Wye has changed its winding course many times over the centuries. Tradition has it that only a shallow rill passable on stepping-stones formerly separated the church from the village.¹² A sworn presentment made at the New Radnor quarter sessions on 14th November 1561, refers to 'the Castle and Castle Green from the west style of the churchyard to the bridge end', and further notes that the bailiff is charged to enclose the land 'from the west style of the churchyard of Glasbury to the corner of the great broad



Fig. 2 Armorial crest and shield on the tombstone of Griffith Williams of Werne (died 12th June 1683); sketched in his journal by one of the gentlemen who accompanied the Lord Warden of the Marches. The monument was formerly in the 1665 church of St Peter but no longer exists. Detail from *The Account of the official Progress of his Grace the First Duke of Beaufort through Wales in 1684*, from the original manuscript of Thomas Dineley (London 1888)



Fig. 3 Interior of St Peter's church in 1907, showing the old Bevington organ in the southeast corner of the nave. Purchased in 1882, it was sold to Llanigon church in 1911, after Captain A. Glen Kidston had donated the new Norman & Beard organ and chamber in memory of his father. In the first part of the nineteenth century the psalm-singers had been accompanied by bass viol and flute; from the 1860s, a harmonium supplied the music. Postcard: Cartwright, Photographer, Talgarth

field and to keep all the scite of the lord's mansion with the ground on the back side of the church between the church and the river to the west end of the bridge several to the lord's use, and to set a gate for passage in the highway near to the said church style'.¹³ Clearly, at that date the river ran to the south of the church. In 1665 representatives of the parish explained to the Bishop at the consecration of the new churchyard that: 'Heretofore wee had a Church uppon the other side of the water'.¹⁴ The statement is ambiguous; it suggests that although the great flood probably did result in certain changes to the course of the river, the violent shift of the Wye to the north that divided the site of the old church from the village may have happened somewhat later.¹⁵

(B) *The Restoration Church*

To secure the new church from the danger of future inundations, a new site was sought. Land was given by Sir Henry Williams of Gwernyfed, material salvaged from the old edifice, and in 1663 work began.¹⁶ Legend recounts that one day during the building, the farmers being busy with the harvest were unable to haul the stone for the church and left the carts full of stone. At dusk an enormous white horse appeared, hauled the carts one by one to the church, and disappeared with

the dawn.¹⁷ By January 1665 the church was finished (the first marriage and baptism being performed in the middle of that month), although the church was not consecrated until June 29th 'being Sct Peters Day, & was soe called St Peters Church'.¹⁸

Minutes of a parish meeting held on 25th November 1726 record the unanimous decision to erect four benches in the existing gallery, with 'Doors on the Enterance of the two foremost benches, made of good boards, so that the said Doors might be locked for the use of the Freeholders of the p(ari)sh'; there was also to be 'a handsome window Transome foure foot square to give light to the said Gallery – well Tyled and Glazed'.¹⁹



Fig. 4 The St Peter's bell-ringers: Band who rang the first local peal (Grandsire Doubles) on St Peter's bells, standing outside the west door 27th September 1911: John N. Vizor (treble), Arthur G. Arnold (2nd), Leonard Lewis (captain, 3rd), James P. Hyett (4th), Edgar R. Jones (5th), Thomas Turner (tenor), with (front left and right) Edward Pugh and Thomas Vaughan, and (back left to right) Hon R.C. Devereux (Church-warden), Rev H. H. Gibbon (Vicar) Capt A. Glen Kidston (Churchwarden). The peal was rung in honour of the marriage of the Rev R.H. Gibbon (eldest son of the vicar) to Miss Mary Harris of Ely. Photograph in St Peter's ringing chamber



Fig. 5 St Peter's bell-ringers: Band who rang in the New Year at midnight on 31st December 1999, and again at noon on 1st January 2000 (when church bells throughout the country were rang to celebrate the New Millennium), photographed in the ringing chamber: Left to right: (back) Rev R. Martin Reed (Vicar, tenor), John Royds (7th), Alec Edwards (6th), John Mulford (Local Project Co-ordinator, 4th), Ossie Evans (5th), Margaret A. V. Gill (Project Archaeologist, 3rd), (front) Brian Collins (Churchwarden, treble), Amy Bond (treble), Angela Evans (2nd). The bells, which had become unringable, were restored in 1999 with the aid of Lottery funding as a Millennium Project. On Saturday 20th August 2005 a visiting band rang a new peal of 5024 changes (composed and conducted by Anthony R. Peake) called: Glasbury-on-Wye Surprise Major. Inset: Millennium logo. Photograph: John Mulford

Writing in the early nineteenth century, Jonathan Williams described the church as having four windows along the north side, each containing two lights; the east window contained three lights divided by stone mullions supporting cinquefoil arches, and the space above under the point of the arch was filled in a similar manner.²⁰ It was from personal memory that Jane Williams later wrote of the 1665 church as having a low square tower with a sloping pyramidal roof surmounted by a weathervane. Inside the nave, the pulpit and desk were fixed to the south wall near the chancel partition. The cloths were dark blue, that overhanging the pulpit bearing the date 1665 in gold letters. The royal arms were painted above the chancel arch, with the Ten Commandments, Creed, Lord's Prayer and scriptural texts elsewhere round the walls. A gallery approached by a broad oak staircase stood against the north wall (facing the pulpit), and a singers' gallery stood against the west wall approached by a staircase from the tower. The south entrance was

protected by a porch, which had stone benches and a wooden gate.²¹

Almost nothing remains of the 1665 church, apart from the lower courses of the chancel walls, some of the memorials and the altar rails. The latter were probably salvaged together with a cupboard-like communion table (replaced in 1881) from the medieval church, having been installed in the 1630s in accordance with an order from Archbishop Laud. Originally they bounded the table on three sides, their balusters set close together to prevent dogs that accompanied their masters into church from befouling the sanctuary.

By the 1820s, the church was in a dilapidated state, and its seating capacity of 320 persons was considered too small for the increased population.²² The visitation return in 1828 reported an average number in the congregation of about 500, the church being arranged 'to contain not more than four hundred. Those over & above are uncomfortably situated'.²³ It was therefore decided in 1836 to pull down the old church and erect a larger one on the same site, taking in part of the churchyard in addition.²⁴ Legend (and it is no more than a legend!) says that worship continued in the old church while the new was built around it.²⁵

(C) *The Present Church*

Lewis Vulliamy, a London architect with local connections, designed the new church on a larger scale. To those tendering for the work, it was emphasised that the greatest economy needed to be observed in the execution of every part of the new building, and no unnecessary labour or materials were to be employed; old material was to be re-used if sound, but in such parts of the church as would be most out of sight and the cost of the three porches was to be estimated separately. In the event, these were never built.²⁶ Work began in 1836 with stone coming from the adjoining quarry, and the new church was opened for divine service on 23rd May 1838, although it was not consecrated until 13th November.²⁷ Further alterations were carried out in 1881, when the west gallery was removed, the chancel raised by one foot, the floors throughout the building laid with encaustic tiles replacing the old flagstones, new seating installed, and the windows re-glazed with 'Cathedral glass of a natural tint' (all but those above the north door since replaced with stained glass). A space was left 'for a new organ which it is hoped will soon be forthcoming'; and a new heating system was provided.²⁸

On Sunday 16th January 1887 fire broke out, the new stoves having become choked with soot. At the morning service the church 'had seemed so cold that larger fires were suggested, and the Clerk being unwell, his wife replenished the same. On returning to the church to prepare for the evening service she discovered that the southern end of the building was on fire. She quickly summoned assistance, and after a short time the fire was got under, but not until considerable damage had been done. Some of the seats were totally destroyed, and a portion of the wall had to be knocked down to reach the flue'. Only a short service was held in the evening, 'the smoke being so dense'.²⁹ Another service conducted under trying circumstances

was Harvest Evensong on Friday 26th September 1913. As the psalms were being sung 'the water gave out at the organ, and the anthem had to be abandoned. The electric light under repair at the time also gave out so that the service lacked much of its usual brightness'³⁰

Glasbury Church: All Saints

Glasbury is a large parish. The Rev James Newman recognised the problem involved when on 26th October 1877 he petitioned for the Bishop's licence to perform divine service in the National School Room at Ffynnon Gynydd 'for the accommodation of the population residing' there, who 'by reason of the distance do not attend the Parish Church of Glasbury aforesaid'.³¹ He did not anticipate that within a few years his benefice would be divided and a new parish created north of the river. The circumstances surrounding the building of All Saints' church are well documented.³²

Within a month of the death of Walter de Winton on 24th May 1878, his younger brother Major Francis de Winton wrote to the Ecclesiastical Commissioners that the widow and rest of the family proposed to erect a church to his memory and for the use of the population in the Radnorshire section of the parish. A lengthy correspondence ensued. The trustees of the Maesllwch Estate were prepared to give a site and defray the cost of building, upon condition that the Commissioners agreed to assign the church a separate ecclesiastical district and to provide an endowment and a house of residence for the incumbent. This they declined to do; however, if the church were to be built as a chapel-of-ease to the mother church of Glasbury, they would make an annual grant for the stipend of a licensed assistant curate. On 13th December 1878, the family agreed to 'build a church at a cost of not less than £2000'. Meanwhile in correspondence with the Bishop of St David's, the Commissioners expressed a willingness to assign the proposed church a 'District Chapelry' comprising the Radnorshire part of the parish, supplement the income of the incumbent and consider assisting towards the provision of a parsonage if the vicarial tithe-rent charges and other emoluments currently attaching to the mother church were surrendered to form an endowment for the new cure. By the end of 1879, the Vicar had refused to accept the Commissioners' proposals with regard to the division of the tithe rent-charges and the Commissioners had refused to secure a £300 per annum endowment; so on 13th December 1879 Penry Lloyd (agent to the Maesllwch Estate) wrote informing the Commissioners that Mrs de Winton's offer was withdrawn, the building of the proposed memorial church was to be abandoned and she would erect some other form of memorial to her husband's memory.

A competition had already been held. George C. Haddon's design for the new church had been selected from among fifty entries and approved by the architect for the Commissioners. Alternative versions of the design would allow for it to be built in two stages, if need be. In the event of the erection of the tower and spire

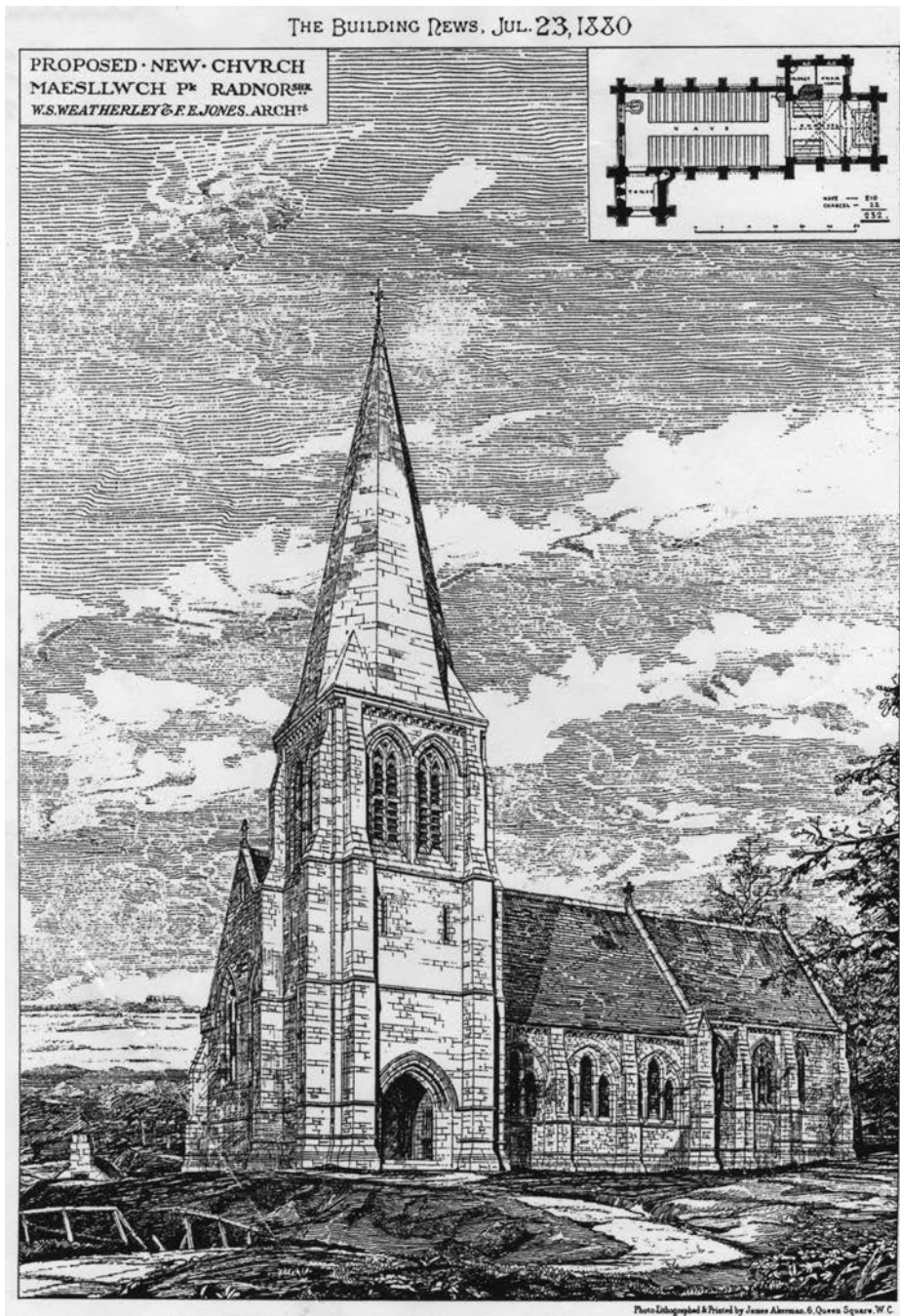


Fig. 6 “Proposed new church, Maessllwch Pk”, submitted by W. S. Weatherley & F. E. Jones in a design competition for All Saints’ church in 1878; the entry was unsuccessful. Lithograph published in *The Building News* 23 July 1880

being postponed, the porch would be finished with a permanent roof, which could later be removed without disturbing more than the outward covering. Seventeen contractors from as far afield as Cardiff, Bristol and Malvern answered the advertisement for tenders, but the estimates ranged from £3500–£5825. New tenders were sought for the church without tower and spire, and twelve of the same contractors provided estimates ranging from £1947–£2500. At this stage the idea of building the memorial church was abandoned.

Then, as Edwin P. Vulliamy explained in the application for a grant from the Incorporated Church Building Society, ‘the parish took the matter up, as the advantage was too great to be lost’. A schedule form dated 26th October 1880 refers to the memorial church for the first time by name as the ‘New church of St.Cecilia’, for it was now intended to be a memorial also to Walter de Winton’s mother Julia Cecilia Stretton (died 17th July 1878). Although the church was eventually dedicated to All Saints, St Cecilia is depicted in a memorial window to Julia. As the lowest tender seemed excessive, it was decided to erect the church using estate labour and local tradesmen under the supervision of Edwin Vulliamy (son of St Peter’s church architect) and Penry Lloyd. Funds were raised with subscriptions from the Maesllwch Trustees, the de Winton family and friends, and local residents, and from the proceeds of a grand bazaar held at the castle. Building commenced in January 1881 according to Haddon’s original plans, modified with a view to economy. Stone was quarried on the estate and neighbouring farmers assisted with the haulage. The land having been duly transferred to the Ecclesiastical Commissioners, the new church of All Saints was consecrated on 10th October 1882.³³ The Vicar of Glasbury surrendered to the Bishop his right of patronage, and by an Order in Council the ‘District Chapelry of All Saints, Glasbury’ was created on 29th December 1882.³⁴ Finally, on 18th September 1883 a scheme for the apportionment of the tithe-rent charges came into force.³⁵ Among the special gifts donated to the church was an organ, so large that it occupied most of the space allocated on the original plan for a vestry. The vicar found it most inconvenient to be cramped into the narrow corridor at the side and back of this magnificent instrument with a mob of choirboys; however, this was remedied in 1886 when an extension was built behind the organ.³⁶ Meanwhile, at the Easter vestry meeting of 1885 it was resolved that the matter of building the tower ‘be for the present abandoned’.³⁷ The subject was never again discussed.

Vestry minutes, churchwardens’ accounts and service registers document the general running of the church, and some of its activities and concerns.³⁸ Music played an important role. Before even the church was consecrated, a choir had been formed. At times a choir trainer was brought in and payments made for his lodging; the choirboys were rewarded with bonuses for regular attendance, and the expenses paid for the choir to take part in the Choir Union Festival at Brecon and elsewhere. On 1st August 1894, the total cost of ‘Tickets to Builth & omnibus’ together with ‘Choir Luncheon & Tea at Builth’ was £3-19-3; and on 20th June

1899 £1-16-0 was paid out for 'Choral Festival 24 Luncheons & Teas'! There were regular purchases of music sheets so that special anthems could be sung at the Harvest and Easter Services; although psalters had been purchased in 1898, further psalters with different arrangements were bought in July 1901, followed by cantatas in the September and music by Caleb Simper just before Christmas. A century later the choir at St Peter's took great delight in reviving some of the Simper anthems. In 1903, when asked what method he adopted for the encouragement of congregational singing, the vicar replied: 'The female members of the choir sit in the nave'!³⁹ In the register of services there is a sad entry for 22nd February 1914: 'Mr. Amos died suddenly at the organ: heart failure', though perhaps sitting at the organ, playing for Evensong in the church he had served for over twenty years, is how he might have wished to die. Older parishioners remember well the year of the snow. At All Saints' church, on 30th December 1962 and the following two Sundays there was 'No service owing to snow & frozen heating system'; and on the next four Sundays services were held in the vicarage.

Aberllyfni Church: St Eigan

References to the ancient church of Aberllyfni are few. Even the dedication is problematic. In the late 1690s, Edward Lhwyd (keeper of Oxford museum) carried out a survey of Welsh parishes, making several extensive expeditions on foot and sending out several hundred questionnaires. According to this survey, the church was dedicated to a mysterious Gorgonius otherwise St Eigan.⁴⁰ It has been suggested that after the Norman Conquest, Bernard de Newmarch may have attempted to conciliate the Welsh by restoring Aberllyfni to Bleddyn ap Maenarch's eldest son Gwrgan.⁴¹ If the latter were responsible for the building of a church, it might have been named after him, in accordance with Welsh custom. However, the reference to St Eigan implies an earlier Celtic foundation, associated perhaps with the patron saint of Llanigon who according to one account was the brother of St Cynidr. Whatever the circumstances of its foundation, Aberllyfni was an independent ecclesiastical parish. When Pope Nicholas IV granted a tithe of the Church emoluments to Edward I in 1288 for six years towards the financing of his crusade to the Holy Land, the chapelry was mentioned in the taxation assessment, separately from and at a quarter of the value of neighbouring Glasbury.⁴²

Occasional entries in the earliest Glasbury registers record a marriage or burial at Aberllyfni,⁴³ the latest being 18th May 1717, when 'Clement Williams of ye p(ari)sh of Aberllyfni was bur(ie)d in yt. Church'. Charles Pritchard of Pipton, described in Lhwyd's survey as 'an old serv(an)t yt formerly belong'd to Gwernyfed', was buried at Aberllyfni on 11th February 1698(9) 'aged 114, as common fame reports'. Under the terms of Sir David Williams' will dated 15th January 1612, the tithes of Gwenddwr were to be employed for various charitable purposes, among which he specified: 'Item I will & demise that there shall be a sermon preached every Trinity Sunday for ever att Aberllyfny for the wch the preacher shall have for his

paynes Xs & that day there shall be ever disposed in breade Amongst the poore of thatt parish of Aberllynfi & Velyndre XXXs'.⁴⁴ There is evidence that the sermon was preached at Aberllynfi by the Vicar of Glasbury as late as 1739.⁴⁵ After this the records are silent, and the church seems to have fallen into disuse, a topographical dictionary of 1811 noting that it had 'been in ruins for the last sixty years',⁴⁶ although it had been in a sorry state years earlier.⁴⁷ According to an oral tradition reported at the beginning of last century, this came about because of a duel that took place one Sunday between two claimants of a neighbouring estate. One of the combatants being slain within the church, it was never again used for divine service.⁴⁸

Overgrown with hawthorn and ash, the site of the church is still visible. Amid the rubble, the stones of the lower courses preserve the outline of the rectangular nave with its south entrance and slightly narrower chancel (though at some date the walls have been rebuilt to form a sheep pen). But nothing now remains of the sepulchral monuments that once graced its interior. The most impressive of these was probably that of Sir Henry Williams of Gwernyfed, of which a sketch exists in one of Edward Lhwyd's notebooks.⁴⁹ By the time Theophilus Jones was writing his *History of Brecknock* at the beginning of the nineteenth century, the church was in ruins, having fallen into decay around the middle of the previous century.⁵⁰ He noted that among the mutilated monuments of the Williams' family was the 'effigy of a person in judicial robes, but lacking the head'. Nearby was an octagonal stone font, bearing the inscription:

W
SHE
1635



Fig. 7 Remains of Aberllynfi church: stone with carved moulding probably part of the doorway, uncovered and photographed in 1958; wall of sheep pen built on foundation of old church, in background. Photograph: Jack Pettican

which was probably the gift of Sir Henry Williams and his wife Eleanor. For many years it served as a flower container near the entrance to Great House Farm before being moved to St Peter's churchyard in the 1880s, where it stood on a pedestal in the angle at the northwest corner of the church.⁵¹ Later it displaced the nineteenth century font inside the building. A further relic from the church now preserved in St Peter's comprises a fifteenth century carved oak crown of thorns with the sacred monogram IHS. An enigmatic inscription on the back of the roundel reads: 'FROM ABERLLYNFI CHURCH VELINDRE CHAPEL'.

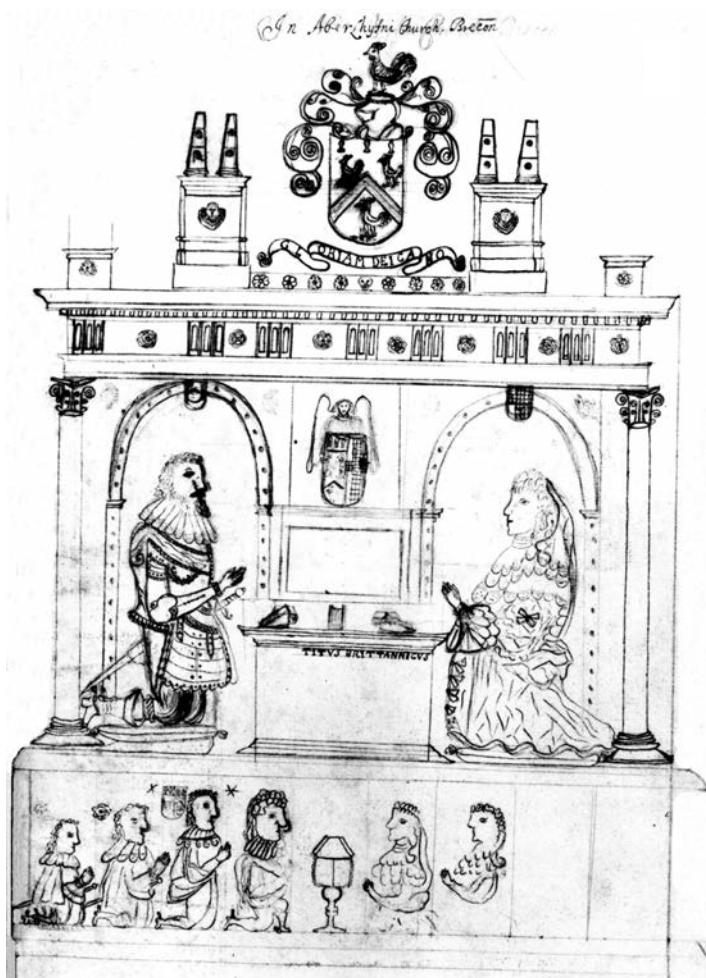


Fig. 8 Monument of Sir Henry Williams of Gwernyfed (died 20th October 1636) with his wife and children, formerly in Aberllynfi church; sketched in one of the late seventeenth century notebooks of Edward Lhwyd, Keeper of the Oxford Museum. The monument no longer exists. (Rawlinson MS.c.920). Published by courtesy of the Bodleian Library

Pipton Chapel

Less than half a mile from Aberllynfi church lies the site of Pipton or Peperton chapel, whose foundation also may predate the Norman Conquest. Although the earliest specific references come from the latter part of the twelfth century, when Kenebano and Renegim (chaplains of Piperton) were witness to deeds among the charters of Brecon Priory,⁵² it was probably one of the chapels granted by Bernard de Newmarch to the abbot and monks of St Peter's abbey at Gloucester. It is mentioned on several occasions in the chartulary of Gloucester in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. Geoffrey de Hennelawe (Bishop of St David's 1203–1214) names Pipton and its chapel in a charter confirming the abbey's possessions in Wales; and Glasbury is referred to as the mother church.⁵³ In 1325 the abbot undertook to provide a priest to minister daily in Pipton chapel during the lifetime of Lady Etheldreda, and three times a week after her death.⁵⁴ Following the dissolution of the monasteries, Pipton was granted to the Bishop of Gloucester, and its tithes and emoluments 'together with all landes tenements, rent portions and pensions' were leased.⁵⁵

Sometime during the eighteenth century the chapel fell into disuse.⁵⁶ The local historian Jane Williams lived for a period around 1824 at Pipton Cottage; she states that: 'Even tradition has forgotten the site of Pipton Chapel, of which every vestige was effaced during the same century from Pipton Green'.⁵⁷ However, a surveyor's report for the Ecclesiastical Commissioners in 1855 mentions the remains of the chapel;⁵⁸ further particulars added in the Glanusk (1911) edition of the *History of Brecknockshire* noted that the foundations could still be seen to the left of the river Llynfi, just below Pipton Bridge,⁵⁹ and the site is marked on earlier ordnance survey maps (close to the hawthorn covered tump).⁶⁰

Velindre Chapel

Three chapels-of-ease for Glasbury are listed in Edward Lhwyd's parochial queries of 1697: 'Capel y felindra. Capel y Klâs. Kapel y ffin'.⁶¹ In notes made at the beginning of the nineteenth century Jonathan Williams remarked that both Velindre and Pipton chapels 'have been suffered to fall into decay and ruin, and the whole duty has been transferred to the church of Clasbury'.⁶² The tithe map of 1841 marks the 'site of Old Church' in the triangle of land on which the village hall now stands, and a few stones at the rear of this building may have been part of the ruins. However, an ancient archway incorporated into the porch of Gwernfyed Old Hall is reputed to have come from the nearby chapel; this would indicate a Norman date for its construction.⁶³ Otherwise, little is known of the chapel at Velindre. The earliest specific references are to be found in the oldest of St Peter's registers, where there are occasional records of baptisms, marriage and burials from the 1660s onwards, the latest burial having taken place at Velindre on 27th February 1714(5).⁶⁴

An account book of the overseers of the poor of the parish of Glasbury around the turn of the nineteenth century contains minutes of parish meetings stated to

have been held at Velindre chapel. The accounts include payments for ale or cider consumed at the meetings, also for the use of the house. On 31st January 1794 the overseer was 'ordered to Pay Wm. Williams at necessity and for the Trouble of the House at this meeting'. Although the chapel had fallen into disuse many years earlier, it would seem from these entries that part at least of the building was still standing and inhabited by one of the poorer parishioners who was paid for providing houseroom for the meetings several times a year. In February 1801, the 'trouble of the house' was thoughtfully paid for in kind with 'a Bag of coal for 2/6'.⁶⁵

Glasbury Chapel

Among the papers of the Rev John Williams is a copy of his reply to a questionnaire dating from about 1745.⁶⁶ In response to a series of questions relating to any chapels within the parish, he wrote: 'There are three Ruinated Chapels in the Parish where Divine Service has not been performed within the memory of Man to wit: Glasbury Chapel and Pipton Chapel both within a quarter of a Mile to the Place where the old church was and Velindre Chapel which is about a mile distant from the Parish Church'. The precise location of Glasbury Chapel is uncertain; it was possibly in the vicinity of Cwmbach. It is mentioned in two mid-seventeenth century documents. In one dated 3rd November 1647, Ievan Thomas carpenter purchased a messuage with an orchard and two gardens in the village between Gardd y gove, the land of Roger William John David and the house of Watkin Prosser, and lying 'both sides the waie that leadeth from Glasburie Church towards the Chapell of Glasburie';⁶⁷ and on 30th May 1657, Thomas leased 'All that little p(ar)cell of land contayninge by Estimacon half a q(uar)ter of an acre or thereabouts lyinge between the pounce, the lande of the said Evan Thomas, and the waie leadinge from Glasburie church towards the Chapell there'.⁶⁸

Capel-y-ffin Church: St Mary

Capel-y-ffin means the chapel of the boundary - and boundaries tend to be subject to contention. In 1708 there was a lengthy dispute in the ecclesiastical court, when the vicar of Llanigon refused to carry out his duties as there was no salary for the work, despite the fact that for some ten or twelve years previously he or his curate had regularly officiated there. The churchwardens and sidesmen reported with a petition from the parishioners that 'there are neither morning nor evening prayers in ye sd. Chapell nor the sacrament administered there according to ye custome, and ye sick are not visited'. Parishioners also complained that their children had not been baptized for 'several weekes or months after their birth and until they dyed', while 'severall dead bodies of persons dyeing within the said hamlett' had remained unburied for several days after notice had been given to the vicar or his curate, until relatives were forced to send for ministers of other parishes to come and baptize their children and bury their dead. Under examination, some witnesses declared the chapel to be in the parish of Glasbury and others in Llanigon, but all

agreed that it was a chapel-of-ease to the latter. Thereupon the Bishop's Court decreed that Rev Thomas Lewis or his curate should officiate there.⁶⁹ However, in Edward Lhwyl's survey in the 1690s, Capel-y-ffin was included in the parish of Glasbury,⁷⁰ and it was to Glasbury that the inhabitants of the hamlet paid their tithes.

The ancient yew trees in the churchyard are far older than the present building.⁷¹ The original medieval church was renovated in the latter part of the eighteenth century, inspired perhaps by the erection of the Baptist chapel nearby.⁷² Inside its simple rectangular hall, the font is medieval, but much of the other furniture and fittings (the pulpit, gallery, altar rail and benches) dates from the 1780s. A south porch was added in 1817.⁷³ The pyramidal bell-cote houses two bells: the smaller probably cast by Evan Evans of Chepstow is inscribed 'GLORY TO GOD SEPT: THE 9 1716'; the larger, recast in 1895 by Llewellyns & James of Bristol, originally bore the inscription 'AVE REGINA CELORVM'.⁷⁴ The restoration of the chapel in 1991 is commemorated in the east window. With the mountain ridge and sky providing a backdrop to the lettering, the clear glass is fittingly engraved with the words: 'I will lift mine eyes unto the hills from whence cometh my help'.

Nonconformist Chapels and Meetinghouses

In a period when so many Nonconformist chapels throughout Wales are being made redundant and demolished or converted to secular use, no fewer than three in the parish of Glasbury appear in Anthony Jones' monograph on Welsh chapels,⁷⁵ listed as buildings which should be 'saved at all costs': Maesyronen, Capel-y-ffin and Treble Hill, each representative of a different period and style of chapel building. In J. W. Hobbs' reminiscences,⁷⁶ he describes the Chapel Sunday school Anniversaries as great events, when children and adults would give songs and recitations: 'One year a grand 'Dialogue' was given by the men of the Chapel. It was called 'Noah's Ark' and the part of the patriarch was taken by the white haired old stationmaster, Mr Jones. There were about a dozen men and boys taking part, but the only two names I remember were a Mr. Holder and the jovial old Precentor, Mr. James Morgan, who added a touch of humour by rushing in, getting stage fright and instead of the grandiloquent speech he should have delivered, looking blankly around and then blurting out, 'the river has ruz, and I'm feared as most of my ships have been washed away'. I was a sinner who repented and arrived after Noah had entered the Ark (the Chapel vestry), and heard the solemn words from inside 'Too late, too late, the door is shut, you cannot enter now!'".

Maesyronen Independent Chapel

Maesyronen is apparently the earliest surviving purpose-built chapel in Wales, and was probably constructed in 1696. The new meetinghouse was registered at the general quarter session held at Presteigne on 13th April 1697, and a certificate was issued stating, that the 'new house in Maesyronnen upon the lande of Charles Lloyd Esqr. in the p(ar)ish of Glasbury in this County' was licensed, allowed and approved



Fig. 9 Professor John Evans outside Maesyronen chapel 12th May 1957, having celebrated his 99th birthday by conducting the morning service (in the afternoon he preached another sermon at the Congregational chapel). “A sparkling wit and delightful conversationalist”, he was still sprightly, walking long distances, and preaching at the age of 100. He died aged 104. (Left to right) Professor John Evans shaking hands with John E. Jones, Frederick Lloyd, Walter Ricketts. Photograph: Marion Griffiths

of ‘to be a place of public meeting for Religious worship for any Protestant Teacher or Preacher Dissenting from ye Church of England to Teach or Preach in, being licenced and authorized so to do, according to the true Intent and meaning of a late Act of Parliam(en)t Entitled an Act for exempting their Ma(jes)ties Protestant Subjects dissenting from the Church of England from the penaltyes of certain Laws’.⁷⁷ In his will dated 27th March 1714, Lewis Lloyd of Maesllwch stated that ‘a Church or Meeting Place for the worship of God by Protestants Dissenters’ had been erected on his lands at Maesyronen, and he gave and devised the same ‘to be made use of for that purpose so long as Liberty for Protestants Dissenters should continue’. Through his wife Theodosia (daughter and executrix of Lewis Lloyd, who died in 1717), Sir Humphrey Howarth became the legal owner of the meetinghouse and the land on which it stood, also of the ‘little house and garden near or thereto adjoining’, which was ‘made use of as Stable and otherwise for the benefitt and better acomodating the said Congregation’. By Indentures of lease and release dated 1st and 2nd April 1720 between Sir Humphrey and the trustees, the terms of the will were confirmed, the trustees of the meetinghouse paying a yearly rent of 20 shillings for the use of the little house and garden.⁷⁸ Way leave of 13p (formerly 2/6d) is still paid annually to the Maesllwch Estate.⁷⁹

After the restoration of the monarchy and before the Act of Toleration of 1689 allowed freedom of worship, Dissenters had held clandestine meetings in the houses of sympathisers, in barns or in secluded hollows away from prying eyes, often at night. Following the founding of the Baptist church at the Hay around 1650, it is thought that Independents of the Llanigon congregation separated into three branches, one meeting in 'Y-Beudy' (the cowshed) at Maesyronen, where Oliver Cromwell is said to have attended at least one service. Y-Beudy may have stood on the site of the later chapel, although some historians have suggested it was located in a nearby meadow.⁸⁰ In Elizabethan times, a medieval wooden building had been replaced with a stone house (later substantially rebuilt); from this house a doorway led into the adjoining area (probably a barn or cowshed) now occupied by the chapel. This annexe was dismantled to make way for the chapel.⁸¹ As there was no precedent for chapel architecture, the local builders constructed a simple, barn-like room in which to listen to the Word of God read from the Scriptures or preached in sermons from the lofty pulpit.

In 1715 Dr John Evans compiled a list of Nonconformist churches with the 'Number of Hearers' for each. Maesyronen is credited with two hundred and fifty 'hearers'.⁸² These would have congregated from several parishes; nevertheless the estimate seems overly optimistic! Thirty years later and referring only to Glasbury, the Rev John Williams wrote: 'I think there are near 100 small Families in this Parish and four of them are giddy-headed People which go sometimes to Church, sometimes to the Presbyterian meeting and sometimes . . . after ye Methodists . . . There is a Presbyterian Meeting-house in ye Parish which was built about 40 years ago by some people of fortune in this and the neighbouring Parishes and as they dyed their numbers decreased considerably and are now reduced to very few. Their Preacher which had been among them for above 30 years dyed about 3 years ago and they have not been able to agree among themselves for another ever since and are now some Sundays without a Preacher'.⁸³ This was not the beginning of the end; temporary difficulties overcome, two and a half centuries later Maesyronen is still a meetinghouse. The intervening period was not without problems; some such were experienced by the Rev David Jones. Pastor of Maesyronen for fifty years (1796–1846), he died on 26th September 1849 at the age of 83, and a tablet was placed on the north wall of the chapel in his memory. His epitaph leaves the reader curious as to what adversities he had faced and overcome: 'HE BEGAN EARLY, CONTINUED LATE; AND / MET WITH STORMS AND ENEMIES OF THE / MOST MALIGNANT KIND. / HE STOOD FIRM HIS GROUND AND DID CRY / HALLELUJAH!'

Pipton Independent Chapel

Some historians have claimed a different origin for Maesyronen, as 'an offshoot of an Independent chapel which once existed at Pipton (Mr.Price's)'. It is said that around the year 1640 members of this chapel determined to separate, one part

going to Brecon and the other to Maesyronen. In the 1930s the remains of the chapel could 'still be traced on the banks of the Llynfi just below the house' (which seems to point to the same site as that claimed for Pipton's medieval chapel!).⁸⁴ Another local tradition asserts that the chapel was near Three Cocks Station.⁸⁵

Glasbury United Reform Memorial Chapel

During a visit of the Rev Newman Hall to Maesyronen, a service was held in a large tent pitched on Glasbury village green, and the building of a chapel in the village was mooted,⁸⁶ for the old chapel was 'too much after its own day to suit modern worshippers' besides being 'somewhat inconveniently situated'.⁸⁷ At a conference held at Maesyronen on 25th March 1863 to consider the necessity of erecting a new chapel, it was resolved unanimously that immediate steps should be taken and a committee formed for this purpose.⁸⁸ A building fund was started and a grant of £150 obtained from Samuel Morley, who was offering sums of money towards the erection of a certain number of Congregational chapels during a given period, such chapels to be known as Memorials of the Bicentenary Celebration of the Ejection of 1662.⁸⁹ Plans were draughted by the famous chapel designer, the Rev Thomas Thomas of Glandwr; a site was secured and, after some delay, work began. The builder of the modified Gothic edifice was Edward Powell of Hay. Much of the stone was quarried locally at Cwmbach, while the dressing stone came from Dolerw quarry, and the crestring tiles on the slate roof were from Broseley.⁹⁰

The new chapel opened on 26th October 1866 and proved so popular that pews were even let on the gallery. However, less than half the building cost had been raised; and twenty years later there remained substantial liabilities. It was explained in a Jubilee Year appeal that 'for some time after the first few years of its existence the Church had a very chequered history. The circumstances were so trying as utterly to forbid any further effort to reduce the debt'. In recent years further problems beset the chapel. With dwindling congregations unable to maintain a structure designed to seat some 340 people, the chapel was forced to close as a place of worship, holding its final service on 20th March 2005; and like so many other chapels throughout Wales, it has been converted into living accommodation.

Capel-y-ffin Baptist Chapel⁹¹

Tradition claims that as early as 1633 there was a Baptist church among the inhabitants of Olchon, who joined with the newly formed church of the Hay in 1650.⁹² The Baptists of Capel-y-ffin were long associated with those of Olchon. A report on the state of the churches in Wales taken at the Baptist Association meeting held at Usk in June 1775 notes that the two communities between them had forty members and remarks: 'Olchon is entirely Welch tho' on the borders of Herefordshire. The Meeting has been kept tho' in different Dwellings ever since the time of Charles I. There is only a lofty Hill between the two places, about a mile up and another down. The Lord's Supper is administered alternately at each

place'.⁹³ Although Capel-y-ffin was regarded as belonging to Olchon, the latter never had a proper meetinghouse and it was in Capel-y-ffin that the Baptist chapel was built,⁹⁴ and here in 1770 that the Baptist Association held its annual meeting.⁹⁵

A stone tablet on the outside wall commemorates William and David Prosser, who 'Brought the Ministry of the / Gospel to their House in the Year / 1737. And Secured this Place for / That Sacred Use for the Time Being'. One of the entries 'copyd out of the Old decayd Register Book' notes for June 1737: 'Then was the Revd. Mr. Joshua Andrews Chosen as a Minister'.⁹⁶ By the 1750s there was a burial ground, as inscriptions on tombstones from that period testify. However, according to the 1775 report, Capel-y-ffin dates from 1762. It may be that after some years of holding meetings in the Prosser's house, land was given and an existing building was converted for Divine worship, until the congregation was able to erect the purpose-built chapel. On 5th June 1802, the Rev George Watkins (responsible for the commemoration plaque) devised the meeting house 'with all and singular its appurtenances to Mr. John Harries Mercer of Abergevenny his heirs and assigns for ever in trust for the use of the particular Baptists Church that may Meet there for Divine worship for the time being'.⁹⁷

Other entries copied from the old register record the baptism of members and on occasion their exclusion. On 4th May 1793 it was agreed 'that James Williams to be excluded for drunkenness and other crimes laid to his charge; Anne his wife to be suspended for false speaking with other things unbecoming the Gospel; and Mary Burten for injuring her fellow Members and other crimes. To be done at the Lord's Table. Which was performed the Sabbath following'.

Pen-yr-Heol Baptist Chapel

Another eighteenth century Baptist foundation was that of Pen-yr-heol, situated at the end of the road in the hills above Velindre. Meetings are said to have been held first at Island Farm in the parish of Llanigon,⁹⁸ or at Pen-yr-heol Farm, the home of John Thomas (minister of Maesyberllan).⁹⁹ With an increasing congregation, it was decided to build a chapel. Land was acquired by a title deed dated 14th November 1783,¹⁰⁰ and the building with its hipped roof and pointed round-headed windows was completed the following year.¹⁰¹ An inscribed tablet on the side wall above the original entrance records the chapel's endowment: '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 Benifit / of this Pen-y-hoel / Church for Ever'; the date is no longer legible, but apparently once read: 'Ibi., Sept. ye 1st. 1788' (less than a week before the donor's death).¹⁰²

Initially a branch of Maesyberllan, in 1819 Pen-yr-heol was recognised as an independent church and a member of the Baptist Association.¹⁰³ The religious census taken on 30th March 1851 records that while 173 persons actually attended the evening service on the day of the census, there was space for three hundred.¹⁰⁴

This seems an extravagant estimate, as a gallery does not appear to have been installed until 1860.¹⁰⁵ The gallery was later removed, the original side-wall entrance sealed and a new porch erected at the north end.¹⁰⁶

In the logbooks of Velindre school, head-teachers occasionally noted events at the local chapels that affected pupils' attendance. On 19th October 1885: 'Very poor attendance, many children gone to Penrheol Harvest Thanksgiving'; in the weekly report of 25th July 1904: 'Anniversary at Penrheol – so many scholars have applied for half holiday that this along with another circumstance caused head teacher to omit usual marking of Registers, though we dismissed at usual time. The circumstance alluded to was a terrific thunderstorm with torrents of rain, entirely precluding those at a distance leaving the shelter of their homes'; again on 20th July 1914: 'Owing to the boisterous & wet state of the weather, & also to a Tea Party taking place at Penrheol Chapel, only a dozen children present in the afternoon'.¹⁰⁷ The memoir of Mary Kinsey (née Harris) recalls such Anniversary services held every year. As a child in the 1890s she used to recite at both afternoon and evening services on the Sunday; then there was another service on the Monday when tea was prepared for everyone who came. Below Penyrheol Cottage was a pool hewn out of the rock; she and her mother went 'one Sunday morning when there were twenty baptised at the Dipping Pool. After the dipping we went to a house where the members had a hot drink and changed into dry clothing'. The last one she remembers was when there was snow on the ground!¹⁰⁸

Treble Hill Baptist Chapel

On 14th January 1792 a petition was made to the Bishop for the licensing of the 'Dwelling house of William Mitchell, called Tilly Mawr, parish Glasbury' as a place of worship for Protestant dissenters (probably Baptists); then a similar petition was submitted on 5th March 1800 for 'Brynsicriog', both farms north of the river. For some years in the 1820s, Baptist meetings were held nearby in the farmhouse at Llwynpenderi, where the farm manager was a member of the Pen-yr-heol church. About 1830 John Jenkins left and was succeeded by Thomas Davis, who also became a Baptist. Then, when he moved to Cilkenny Farm, meetings were held alternate Sundays at Cilkenny and Talymawr, until Davis again moved on (to Boughrood). For a time meetings were held in one of the houses at Ffynnon Gynydd, but around 1859 the tenant moved out, the house itself was shut up and for two years no meetings were held in the neighbourhood.¹⁰⁹

In 1861 the Baptist cause in Glasbury was revived. The church sharing a minister with Pen-yr-heol, a local 'warehouse' was hired as a meetinghouse. On 12th February 1862, a lecture accompanied by a concert was delivered in the Baptist place of worship, on the subject of 'The Millennium'. The speaker examined the scriptural evidence and concluded that the prophecies meant the event would occur 'about the year 2,000, or at the end of the sixth thousand years of the world's history', and 'upon the seventh thousand years, the sabbath of peace and joy will

begin'. The meeting lasted for about five hours, but the attention of the large audience was 'well sustained'!¹¹⁰ The lecture was probably given in one of the old Treble Hill wool warehouses. This location would agree with the vague description contained in an account of the opening services of the new chapel in 1867 when the afternoon service was held in the open air: 'The active friends had prepared seats and erected a temporary platform for the occasion, on a beautiful site for such a gathering. Behind was the old room in which the Baptists have met for divine worship for many years, and though it has nothing attractive in its appearance or imposing in its style, yet undoubtedly the place is sacred to the memory of many friends in the locality'.¹¹¹

Earlier attempts to build a chapel had failed, as a suitable site could not be procured; now Benjamin Piercy (owner of the Treble Hill estate) provided a site next to the bridge. Plans were prepared by John Lewis of Glasbury and embellished by Piercy's own architect; the contractors for the erection of the building and its fittings were James Lewis and Thomas Hughes. On 26th June 1866 the foundation stone was laid and exactly a year later (25th June 1867) Treble Hill Baptist chapel was formally opened.¹¹² It was a very modern building, in Classical style, using brick with stone dressings in its construction, a combination of materials facilitated by the recent opening of the Hereford, Hay and Brecon railway. A feature that impressed at the time (and still impresses) was the light 'so bountifully supplied . . . from Moline's patent wrought iron windows, with Moore's patent ventilators'.¹¹³

Cwmbach Wesleyan Methodist Chapel

During the summer months of 1805, a preacher was frequently to be seen standing on the village green proclaiming the truth of God. Though opposition could not quench his ardour, winter threatened to put an end to the open-air preaching unless someone would volunteer to provide accommodation for the visiting preacher and his horse. The name of the preacher is forgotten, but oral tradition remembered that of the woman who persuaded her husband to invite him to their house: Sarah Price of Ciltwrch. After some years, the home at Ciltwrch was broken up and meetings were transferred to Boughrood. However, to the local squire Richard Hargest of Skynlas traversing his fields, everything about him even the birds seemed to cry 'Lost! Lost! Lost!'; he climbed the mountains to pray alone, but found no peace. Then, crossing a meadow one summer day, he heard the voice of God saying 'Give that corner of this meadow to the Methodists, and build a chapel'. Accordingly in October the squire gave the site for the chapel, subscribing handsomely towards its erection, and on 1st December 1818 Cwmbach chapel was dedicated to God. It is typical of its period with its sidewall façade, slated hipped roof and pointed round-headed windows. In 1836, on learning that a young woman of the membership who was dying had expressed a wish to be buried near the sacred chapel, he gave the adjacent land for a burial ground.¹¹⁴ For himself, he intended that his own body should be buried 'on the west side next the Turnpike

Road of the same Yew tree as my brother Robert Hargest and rest of his family are buried under about one yard from the Trunk of the Tree in Glasbury Church Yard and a Tombstone erected over me at the discretion of my executors'.¹¹⁵

In 1867 the chapel was renovated, and during the 1880s there were further improvements to the interior, including the replacement of the candlesticks with lamps and a chandelier, the lowering of the pulpit and replacement of the old communion table; and the exterior of the building was stuccoed, as it is today. One of the tombstones in the chapel yard records the sad fate of James Bynon, 'an esteemed leader and local preacher of the Wesleyan Connection'. On 28th September 1850, he and his seventeen-year old son were both drowned in the River Wye with three other persons 'while attempting to cross the river in a ferry boat after the fall of Glasbury bridge'. Oppressed with grief, having witnessed the untimely death of her husband and only son, his widow died within a month.

Velindre Ebenezer Calvinistic Methodist Chapel

Seeing that the neighbourhood of Velindre was 'signally destitute of the means of grace', Rev David Charles (President of Trevecca College) began preaching at a farmhouse in the village, then arranged for religious services to be held on successive Sundays for the some twenty years.¹¹⁶ The Religious Census of 1851 recorded an average attendance of 35 persons.¹¹⁷ Though the gathering was modest, such was the enthusiasm aroused that it was decided to erect in a new place of worship, and a site was given for the purpose by Colonel Thomas Wood of Gwernyfed.¹¹⁸ The opening of Ebenezer Chapel on 29th October 1862 was attended by a considerable number of friends from the surrounding area, and sermons were preached in both English and Welsh.

Chapel events played an important part in the life of the community. On 26th October 1894, the head-mistress of Velindre school noted: 'The children are away on account of the Special Service held at the Methodist Chapel this afternoon. I came up to the School as usual and found only 2 children, so dismissed them',¹¹⁹ on 2nd November 1903: 'Tuesday afternoon the annual Tea for the scholars of the Calvinistic Methodist Sunday School attracted so many children that a half holiday was necessary'.¹²⁰ For over a century the chapel was at the centre of village activities, but by the 1970s the congregation had dwindled to such an extent that the chapel was forced to close. On the market for some months, it was eventually purchased in 1983 for use as a dance studio for local children. After a while, part and then all of the building was used as a sewing workshop for the mail-order production of classical ballet costumes. Known as 'Velindre Dance Supplies', its clientele was worldwide. When the owners decided to sell the successful enterprise (which still operates in Talgarth under the style of 'Dancewear UK'), they retained the chapel and in 1995 converted it into a dwelling house.¹²¹

Roman Catholics

Following the Reformation, there is little evidence for the practice of Roman Catholicism in the parish until the twentieth century. In January 1676, enquiries were made by the Archbishop of Canterbury throughout England and Wales as to the number of conformist inhabitants, popish recusants and protestant dissenters in each parish. Unfortunately, the parish of Glasbury with the chapelry of Aberllynfi was omitted from the census. However, a return was made for Llanigon (which probably included the chapelry of Capel-y-ffin), where two papists were reported.¹²² These may have been John George and his wife from Capel-y-ffin, who appear on a list of indicted Nonconformists compiled on 8th April 1684, George having been noted in 1679 as ‘a papist reformed’.¹²³ Around 1745 the Rev John Williams (vicar of Glasbury) averred: ‘There is not one Papist within this Parish’.¹²⁴ In 1762 his successor and namesake was even more emphatic: ‘There is never a Papist, nor Popish place of worship, nor Popish Priest residing, nor Popish School kept in my parish’.¹²⁵

Quakers

In the mid-eighteenth century there was only ‘one very poor Quaker family’ in the parish, ‘a poor weaver a Quaker who brings up his children in that way’.¹²⁶ Between 1657 and 1666 George Fox visited Wales on several occasions, teaching of divine revelation through an individual’s ‘inner light’, and preaching a gospel of brotherly love. By the end of the century the Quaker movement was widespread, but scarcely made itself felt in Glasbury. Entries in St Peter’s church registers refer to two Quaker families: William Jenkins ‘quaker of ye Velindre’ buried 25th January 1690/1 (and his daughter several years later), and Anne Lewis ‘of ye Tyleglass, a Quaker’ buried 26th January 1696/7. An earlier entry refers to ‘William Davids of Talgarth commonly called Y Quaker Côch’, who was found dead ‘on wy side in a place called Groscegir – (it is reported yt he made himself away upon discontent because he shld not marry his maide. The lord of the mannor seized on his Goods & his body is in Glasbury Churchyard near ye way as goes to Aberllynfi, where noe good Xtians are buried) – on ye 27 of November 1688’.¹²⁷ It would appear that in the early years of the new churchyard, as in medieval times, the area north of the church was not regarded as consecrated land; hence it was a suitable place for the grave of a Quaker and a suicide.

Latter Day Saints

Within twenty years of the founding of the Church of Jesus Christ of the Latter-day Saints by Joseph Smith in 1830, a petition for the licence and registration of a Mormon meetinghouse in Glasbury was submitted to the Consistory Court. On 25th January 1850, Philip Seix certified that ‘a certain Room in the House of William Davies in the parish of Glasbury . . . is intended to be used as a place of worship by the congregation of Protestants, called the Latter day Saints’.¹²⁸

MARGARET A. V. GILL

¹ **Introduction:** Following earlier discussions among members of the Brecon Group of the Powys Family History Society, it was decided in Spring 2004 to publish a book on the history of Glasbury, and I was approached to contribute a chapter on the churches and chapels of the parish. Although some contributions had been completed by the following January, others had not, and the project fell into abeyance. Interest in the *Glasbury Book* was briefly revived by the newly formed Glasbury Historical Society in Spring 2010, but little progress was made and the prospect of publication was further deferred. This article was originally researched and written in 2004 as a chapter for the *Glasbury Book*. While the text remains virtually unaltered (other than a few amendments), notes and references to source material have now been added.

² Hobbs J. W., *Reminiscences* published as a series of newspaper articles in the 1960s (undated cuttings in *A Local History* scrapbook compiled by Jack Pettigan; typescript copy in County Record Office (Llandrindod): parochial records St Peter's Glasbury, No.64).

³ **Glasbury St Peter's church:** for more detailed accounts see Jones T., *History of Brecknockshire II* (Brecon 1809), pp. 371–375; Williams J., 'History of Radnorshire', *Archaeologia Cambrensis* IV (1858) pp. 519–522; Williams J., 'Some particulars concerning the parish of Glasbury', *Arch Cam* 4ser.I (1870), pp. 306–323; Dawson M. L., 'Notes on the history of Glasbury', *Arch Cam* 6ser.XVIII (1918), pp. 6–34 and 279–319; Silvester R. J. & Hankinson R., 'Clas, church and village at Glasbury', *Transactions of the Radnorshire Society* LXXIII (2003), pp. 111–126; Gill M. A. V., *Some notes and comments on the history of the churches of SS.Cynidr & Peter Glasbury-on-Wye* (limited edit. Glasbury 2005); Gill M. A. V., *A history of the parish churches of the Wye Valley Group* (Glasbury 2010).

⁴ Jones T, op.cit., p. 46–47.

⁵ Although some historians place it at Ffynnon Gynydd (St Cynidr's well).

⁶ Dawson, op.cit., pp. 9–13, with transcriptions of charters referring to 'ecclesia Sancti Kenedri', and later 'ecclesia Glasburia'; Banks R. W., 'Cartularium prioratus S. Johannis Evang. De Brecon', *Arch Cam* 4ser.XIV (1883), p. 227, with reference to 'Kenedereschirch'.

⁷ In 1403 a grant of the castle and lordship of Clifford and the lordship of Glasbury valued them at one hundred marks before they were 'burnt, devastated and destroyed' by the Welsh under Owain Glyndŵr, who was no respecter of churches (Dawson, op.cit., p. 26). The church of 1665 incorporated windows salvaged from the medieval church; the cinquefoil arches of its east window are indicative of fifteenth century architecture.

⁸ Jones E. D., 'Survey of South Wales chantries, 1546', *Arch Cam* LXXXIX (1934), p. 153; National Library of Wales, Milbourne papers: survey of chantries 14 February 1545/6; Dawson, op.cit., p. 284.

⁹ Alexander Griffith was ejected from the living on the trumped-up charge of drunkenness and lasciviousness.

¹⁰ Lloyd J., *Historical memoranda of Breconshire I* (Brecon 1903), p. 79. Alexander Griffith was vicar of Glasbury 1639–1650 and 1661–1676.

¹¹ Williams, op.cit. (1870), pp. 310–1. The petition in Griffith's handwriting was transcribed by Jane Williams from a copy formerly in the parish chest among the papers of Rev John Hughes (curate 1795–1805); its current whereabouts in unknown.

¹² Williams, op.cit. (1870), p. 311

¹³ Lloyd, op.cit., pp. 75–76.

¹⁴ Williams, op.cit. (1870), pp. 313–319, transcription of the 'Form of Consecrating Glasebury Churchyard'; the copy in Alexander Griffith's handwriting was originally kept in the parish chest, but is now missing. Browne Willis in referring to the 'newly rebuilt' church, also states that 'it was antiently on the other side of the River in Radnorshire' (*Parochiale Anglicanum* (London 1733), p. 183).

¹⁵ Dawson (op.cit., p. 280) vastly under-estimated that 'as late as a hundred years ago there was only a small stream between the church and vicarage' (i.e. at the beginning of the nineteenth century). An estate map of Sir Edward Williams' lordship of Glasbury surveyed circa 1753 marks the Wye and its confluence with the Llynfi in their present locations, with the lane that originally led from the village to the church ending abruptly at the river (NLW Map 7601). Although Emanuel Bowen's *A New and Accurate Map of South Wales* (1729) shows the confluence of the two rivers a mile further upstream

between Pipton and Aberllynfi as on earlier maps by Christopher Caxton (1578) and John Speed (1610), this detail is inaccurate; Edward Lhwyd's survey of 1697 notes that the Llynfi 'falls into Wy neer Glasebury bridge' ('Parochialia being a summary of answers to 'Parochial Queries in order to a Geographical Dictionary, etc, of Wales' issued by Edward Lhwyd', *Arch Cam* supplement 1910, p. 31). This implies that the major alteration in the course of Wye occurred in the latter part of the seventeenth century.

¹⁶ National Record Office (Aberystwyth), St David's diocese, SD/CCB/1 Consistory Court Act 3 January 1662/3 regarding the raising of £300 tax on the inhabitants of the parish, and the agreement with the carpenter to provide materials for the erection of the new church.

¹⁷ Jones T., *History of Brecknock III* (enlarged Glanusk edition, Brecon 1911), p. 88.

¹⁸ Entry inside the cover of the first surviving parish register.

¹⁹ CRO, St Peter's Glasbury No.28 *Charities book 1726–1911*.

²⁰ Hereford Record Office, CF50/249 manuscript of Jonathan Williams, *History of Radnorshire*, p. 427; major part of text published in Williams, op.cit. (1858), and (with additions from other sources) edit. Davies E., *A general history of the county of Radnor* (Brecon 1905). An unpublished section of the manuscript describes the 'six most musical bells, whose melodious tones, reverberated by the opposite hills & floating on the current of the Wye, produce a most pleasing effect. The outward arch of the porch is Saxon: the inner pointed'. Jones (1809) op.cit., pp. 371–375 gives a detailed account of the monuments and their inscriptions but only a brief description of the church itself, as consisting of 'a nave and chancel only, with a heavy tower at the west end and in which there are six bells . . . The chancel is cieled, and flagged, as is also the body of the church, the seats are tolerably regular and in good repair, and it is but cold commendation of it to say that the internal appearance is much superior to our other country churches'. For a history of the bells, see Gill M. A. V., 'Parish church of St Cynidr and St Peter: bells and bell frames', *TRS LXXI* (2001), pp. 56–81.

²¹ Williams, op.cit. (1870), pp. 322–323. No picture of the 1665 church is known other than the tiny symbol (1 cm. in length) on an estate map of Sir Edward Williams' lordship of Glasbury (surveyed in 1753), which shows the building with a squat tower and pyramidal roof; descriptions suggest that in external appearance it was similar to Llandeilo church.

²² Lambeth Palace Library, records of Incorporated Church Building Society No. 849 letter from Rev Charles Bradley dated 14 June 1827 enquiring re grant for enlargement of the church.

²³ NRO, SD/QA/198 (1828).

²⁴ LPL, ICBS No.849 op.cit. letter from Bradley dated 19 December 1836.

²⁵ LPL, ICBS No.849 op.cit. form dated 2 December 1836 stating that the work would be completed within one year, during which time divine service would be held in the National School Room.

²⁶ CRO, St Peter's Glasbury No.16 specification for rebuilding; LPL, ICBS No. 849 op.cit. correspondence 1827–1839 re grant for re-building of the church, with plan.

²⁷ NRO, SD/C/83 draft act of consecration; *Hereford Journal* 9, 30 May, 21 November 1838.

²⁸ NRO, SD/F/175 faculty granted 6 January 1881; CRO, St Peter's Glasbury No.17 faculty; *Hereford Times* 25 June, 2 July 1881.

²⁹ *Hereford Times* 22 January 1887.

³⁰ *Parochial Magazine for the Archdeanery of Brecon* November 1913, p. 201.

³¹ **Glasbury All Saints' church:** CRO, parochial records, All Saints' Glasbury No. 6 papers including petition.

³² CRO, All Saints' No.6, op.cit., correspondence of de Winton family with Ecclesiastical Commissioners and architect, tenders, accounts; LPL, ICBS, op.cit., No. 8559 grant application with correspondence and plan; *Brecon County Times* 14 October 1882; *Hereford Times* 14 October 1882; de Winton G. F. W. & Willis A. L., *All Saints Church – then and now* (Glasbury 1982).

³³ NRO, SD/C/84.

³⁴ *London Gazette* 29 December 1882, pp. 6626–6627.

³⁵ *London Gazette* 18 December 1883, pp. 4556–4578.

- ³⁶ CRO, All Saints', op.cit. No.14 Vestry minutes & accounts 1883–1909, meeting 14 April 1885; *Parochial magazine*, op.cit., November 1884, pp. lxxviii–lxxix.
- ³⁷ CRO, All Saints' No.14, op.cit., meeting 6 April 1885.
- ³⁸ CRO, All Saints' No.14, op.cit., No 15 Vestry minutes & account book 1909–1940, No.4 Offertory book 1909–1931, Nos. 1–3 Registers of services 1932–43, 1943–56, 1956–74.
- ³⁹ NLW, SD/QA/250.
- ⁴⁰ **Aberllynfi church:** Lhwyd, op.cit. p. 30.
- ⁴¹ Dawson, op.cit., pp. 293, 298.
- ⁴² Aberllynfi church was assessed at £4-6-8 and Glasbury at £20 (*Taxatio ecclesiastica angliae et walliae auctoritate P. Nicholai IV circa A.D. 1291* (London 1802), p. 273).
- ⁴³ Wood T., *The registers of Glasbury 1660–1836* (London 1904).
- ⁴⁴ CRO, St Peter's, op.cit. No. 27 Charities book 1612–1674, 1723–1788, containing transcription of will.
- ⁴⁵ NLW, Mss 22078C papers of Rev John Williams (vicar of Glasbury) ff.103 receipt for payment of arrears owing at the death of Lady Howorth for 'sermons preached . . . every Trinity-Sunday in Aberllynvy Church for the years 1734-5-6-7-8-9'.
- ⁴⁶ Carlisle N., *Topographical dictionary of Wales* (London 1811).
- ⁴⁷ Erasmus Saunders gives Aberllynfi as an example of 'churches totally neglected, and that very rarely, if at all, have any service been performed in them, and which, if they are not converted to barns or stables . . . do only serve for the solitary habitations of owls and jackdaws', (Saunders E., *A view of the state of religion in the diocese of St Davids about the beginning of the eighteenth century* (London 1721) p. 23).
- ⁴⁸ Dawson, op.cit., p. 298.
- ⁴⁹ Bodleian Library, Mss Rawlinson C.920, p.3; Banks R. W., 'Sir Henry Williams of Gweryved', *Arch Cam* 4ser.X (1879), pp. 152–153.
- ⁵⁰ Jones (1809), op.cit., p. 374.
- ⁵¹ Lewis S., *A topographical dictionary of Wales* (London 1833); Poole, op.cit., p. 200. The font is marked on the 25inch Ordnance Survey map (1889) Brecknock sheet XXIII.2.
- ⁵² **Pipton chapel:** Banks, op.cit., pp.36, 223–224; Dawson, op.cit., p. 304.
- ⁵³ Way A., 'Confirmation grant by Geoffrey, bishop of St.David's to the abbot and monks of St.Peter's abbey, Gloucester, regarding certain possessions of that monastery in Wales', *Arch Cam* 3ser.VII (1861), p. 72.
- ⁵⁴ Dawson, op.cit., p. 305.
- ⁵⁵ Scattered later references confirm the continued existence of Pipton chapel but add little information.
- ⁵⁶ Although it is still mentioned in a document dated September 1791 in reference to the lease and release of a third part of the rectories and tithes of the churches of Glasbury, Wentworth and Talgarth and the 'chapel of Perperton' (NLW Mss Price of Norton No. 86).
- ⁵⁷ Williams (1870), op.cit., p. 312.
- ⁵⁸ NRO, ECE/SD9.630.
- ⁵⁹ Jones (Glanusk), op.cit., III p. 86.
- ⁶⁰ 6inch Ordnance Survey (1887) No.XXIII NW (Brecon).
- ⁶¹ **Velindre chapel:** Lhwyd, op.cit., p. 30.
- ⁶² HRO, CF50/249, op.cit.; Williams (1858), op.cit., p. 521.
- ⁶³ Dawson, op.cit., p. 311.
- ⁶⁴ Wood, op.cit.
- ⁶⁵ CRO, St Peter's, op.cit. No. 57 Account book of the overseer of the poor of the parish of Glasbury 1786–1802.
- ⁶⁶ **Glasbury chapel:** NLW, Mss 22078C, op.cit., ff.102.
- ⁶⁷ NLW, Mss Skreen & Velinnewydd No. 418.
- ⁶⁸ Skreen, op.cit., No. 417.
- ⁶⁹ **Capel-y-ffin church:** Jones (1809), op.cit., pp. 401; NRO, St David's, op.cit. SD/CCB/55

churchwardens' presentment 1 July 1708; SD/CCB/G328 bundle of documents relating to the citation to the Bishop's Court of Lewis Thomas.

⁷⁰ Lhwyd, op.cit., p. 30.

⁷¹ On 5 April 1870 Rev Robert Francis Kilvert visited Capel-y-ffin and described the chapel as: 'short, stout and boxy with its little bell tower, (the whole building reminded one of an owl) the quiet peaceful chapel yard shaded by the seven great solemn yews' (edit. Hughes K. & Ifans D., *The diary of Francis Kilvert April-June 1870* (Aberystwyth 1982).

⁷² The exact date and extent of any rebuilding is uncertain, as historians may have confused references to the Anglican church of Capel-y-ffin with the adjacent Baptist chapel. Haslam suggests that the date is 'perhaps 1762' (Haslam R., *Poveys* (London 1979), p. 307). However, in 'The state of the Baptist Churches in Wales taken at the Association, held at Usk on the 14th & 15th of June 1775', the list includes 'Capel y ffyn – Brecon – 1762' (NLW Add.Mss. 373C Historical memoranda of T. Rees).

⁷³ Inscription tablet set in gable.

⁷⁴ Evans J. T., *The church plate of Breconshire* (Stow-on-the-Wold 1912), p. 19; Eisel J. C., *The church bells of Breconshire* (Wootton Almeley 2002), p. 33.

⁷⁵ **Nonconformist chapels:** Jones A., *Welsh Chapels* (Cardiff 1984), pp. 86–87.

⁷⁶ Hobbs, op.cit., reprinted in *The Messenger* (parish magazine for the Wye Valley group), May 1997, p. 45.

⁷⁷ **Maesyronen meetinghouse:** NLW, Add Mss 384D No.163 'A Certificate for ye New Meetinge House in Maesyronnen'.

⁷⁸ Maesyronen archive: Indenture dated 19 July 1731, containing relevant terms of will and indenture.

⁷⁹ Information from Frederick Lloyd (treasurer).

⁸⁰ Lloyd D. C., 'Maesyronen and Glasbury-on-Wye', in edit. Thomas T. G. & Jones J., *Brecon & Radnor Congregationalism* (Methyr Tydfil 1912), p. 96.

⁸¹ Hague D. B., 'Miscellanea: Maesyronen Independent chapel', *Arch Cam CV* (1956), p. 144.

⁸² Jones R. T., 'The older dissent of Swansea and Brecon', in edit. Jones O. W. & Walker, *Links with the past* (Llandybie 1974), pp. 127–8.

⁸³ NLW, Mss 22078C. In 1762, his successor and namesake (vicar 1750–1778) recorded: 'There are not above twelve Presbyterians in ye Parish and those are in mean circumstances' (NRO: SD/QA 181). David Price was minister at Maesyronen 1700–1742 (Davies I., 'Maes-yr-onen', *Brecon and Radnor Congregationalist magazine* XXXV No. 3 March 1932). For further details of the chapel and its ministers, see Price, D., *Maesyronnen – a short history and description* (booklet 2008).

⁸⁴ **Pipton Independent chapel:** Morgan W. E. T., *Hay & neighbourhood* (Hay 1932), p. 49.

⁸⁵ Davies I., op.cit.

⁸⁶ **United Reformed chapel:** Appeal leaflet July 1887.

⁸⁷ *Hereford Times* 3 November 1866.

⁸⁸ *Hereford Times* 4 April 1863.

⁸⁹ The partly illegible inscriptions on the façade probably read: '(MEMORIAL) / 16(62)' and '(CONGREGATIONAL) / (CH)A(PEL) / ERECTED / 1866'.

⁹⁰ *Hereford Times* 1866 and leaflet 1887, op.cit.

⁹¹ **Capel-y-ffin chapel:** Although technically the site of the chapel lies just outside Glasbury parish boundary, as the nearby Anglican church was once within the parish, it seemed pedantic to exclude the chapel from this article.

⁹² Thomas J., *A history of the Baptist Association in Wales from the year 1650 to the year 1790* (London 1795).

⁹³ NLW, Add Mss 373C, op.cit.

⁹⁴ Thomas, op.cit., pp. 74.

⁹⁵ Thomas, op.cit., pp. 63.

⁹⁶ NLW Mss 10787 transcript of register of Baptist Church of Capelyffyn.

⁹⁷ NLW Mss 10787, op.cit.

⁹⁸ **Pen-yr-heol chapel:** Wood, op.cit., p. 318.

⁹⁹ Powell R. F. P., 'An outline history of Penyrheol Baptist Chapel in the former parish of Glasbury', *Brycheiniog* XLI (2010), pp. 66–7. John Thomas, the first minister of Pen-yr-heol, died 5 November 1786 (tombstone in graveyard).

¹⁰⁰ Wood, op.cit., p. 320.

¹⁰¹ Powell, op.cit., p. 67.

¹⁰² Wood, op.cit., p. 320. Thomas Williams died 7 September 1788 (tombstone in graveyard). Jones T., op.cit., III (Glanusk edit.), p.93 refers to the endowment of 'Island Farm 73a.0r.9p. and £300 on Mortgages'.

¹⁰³ Powell, op.cit., p. 68.

¹⁰⁴ Jones I. G. & Williams D., *The religious census of 1851 relating to Wales* vol. I *South Wales* (Cardiff 1976), p. 624.

¹⁰⁵ Powell, op.cit., p.68. The roof was also raised by a few feet at this time.

¹⁰⁶ Probably in 1948. Powell, op.cit., p. 72.

¹⁰⁷ CRO, St Peter's Nos.46–47: Velindre School logbooks 1877–1898 and 1898–1921.

¹⁰⁸ CRO, St Peter's No. 63 unpublished manuscript of Kinsey M. J., 'Memoirs of Velindre and district'.

¹⁰⁹ **Treble Hill chapel:** Jones J., *History of the Baptists in Radnorshire* (London 1895), pp. 62–62; Leich D., 'An outline of the history of Treble Hill Baptist church Glasbury' (unpublished 1997, copy in chapel archive).

¹¹⁰ *Hereford Times* 1 March 1862.

¹¹¹ *Hereford Times* 7 July 1867 account of opening of chapel, with a second description of the event in the correspondence column.

¹¹² Notice of laying of foundation stone (copy reproduced in Leitch, op.cit., but original copies of both this and opening services missing from envelope in chapel archive).

¹¹³ *Hereford Times* 6 July 1867.

¹¹⁴ **Cwmbach chapel:** Wynne-Jones T., *Wesleyan Methodism in the Brecon circuit* (Brecon 1888), pp. 55–59. In the register of places of religious worship used by Protestant Dissenters there is a deleted entry for 24 October 1818 for a meetinghouse at Glasbury that may refer to the chapel at Cwmbach (NLW, SD/DISS/1).

¹¹⁵ NLW, BR/1842/22 will dated 20 March 1842, proved 2 May 1842. A memorial tablet in the chapel records his death on 22 March, and his various bequests to the chapel.

¹¹⁶ **Velindre Ebenezer chapel:** *Hereford Times* 8 November 1862.

¹¹⁷ Jones & Williams, op.cit., p. 627 Felindre Farm House.

¹¹⁸ Wood, op.cit., p. ix.

¹¹⁹ CRO, St Peter's No. 46.

¹²⁰ CRO, St Peter's No. 47.

¹²¹ Information from June Grundy.

¹²² **Roman Catholics:** edit. Whiteman, A., *The Compton census of 1676* (Oxford 1986), p. 472.

¹²³ NLW, St David's diocese Order book 1670–1685.

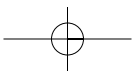
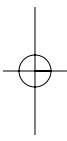
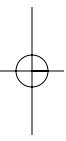
¹²⁴ NLW, Mss 22078C, op.cit., ff.102.

¹²⁵ NRO, SD/QA 181 (1762).

¹²⁶ **Quakers:** NRO, SD/QA 181 (1762).

¹²⁷ Wood, op.cit.; Williams (1870), op.cit., pp. 321–322.

¹²⁸ **Latter Day Saints:** NRO, SD/PDM/23.



ARTISAN TO ARTIST:
SAM GARRATT, BRECON ARTIST, 1864–1946

This article has been contributed by Abigail Kenwyn, Assistant Curator at the Brecknock Museum & Art Gallery, who staged the exhibition of Sam Garratt's work at the Museum in 2011. Following the Exhibition, the Brecknock Society, together with the Museum, wishes to establish a catalogue of Sam Garratt's work, and would be grateful for details of any works held by, or known to, subscribers and readers. The Society will guarantee the anonymity and location of works. Please contact the Museum or the Brecknock Society. Ed.



Sam Garratt is a well known name to people in Brecon. Despite being born nearly 150 years ago, a recent exhibition of his work at Brecknock Museum & Art Gallery titled 'Artisan to Artist', drew in a significant number of people. Many people who visited commented on their love for his work and many proudly declared that they had their own piece of art, by this highly respected artist.

In preparation for the exhibition, we wanted to explore the man behind the art wherever possible. As he was a cobbler by profession, displaying a tiny pair of girl's shoes from his shop in Free Street, acted as a reminder that he was an ordinary man with an honest trade. This should be remembered when looking at his art. It makes his talent all the more remarkable.

Born in 1864 to parents Samuel and Jane, in Barwell, Leicestershire, Garratt was the eldest of nine children. He left school at the age of 12, as many children did at this time, to work in the local boot and shoe factory. At around this time in his childhood an unfortunate accident occurred that was to greatly influence the course of his life. At the age of 11, shortly before he was due to leave school, he was knocked down and injured by a horse and cart. The owner of the vehicle was a headmaster, and as an apology to the young boy, he bought Garratt a box of paints. It was this unusual event which provided Garratt with his first introduction into the world of art.

At the age of 17, still living with his family, Garratt had progressed from his basic work in the factory and was now working as a shoe riveter. This was to be a trade that he would stay in for most of his life.

We know from the 1901 census that Garratt had continued in the boot and shoe trade, and had moved into Leicester. It is possible that he had moved into that city in order to attend evening classes at the School of Art. This census records him as living at 39 Norman Street, and he is married to Elizabeth. Samuel is aged 37 and his wife, aged 34. His occupation is a boot maker and foreman of finisher workers. He and his wife have no children of their own, but he has his nephew and niece living with him, William Norman aged 15 and Florence M. Gascoigne aged 7.

In 1906 he moved with his family, to Brecon. It is thought this move was inspired by a previous visit to the area, where Garratt fell in love with the little town, nestled amongst the Brecon Beacons.

It was here that he owned two successful shoe shops. The first of his properties was a boot and shoe business located at Number 30 High Street, which he took over from the late Miss Bell. Shortly after this, he acquired his second premises, situated on Free Street which he opened as a boot and shoe repairing business. His shops also served as his galleries, with his paintings on sale lining the walls and filling the windows so that passers by could admire and purchase his work.

Whilst living in Brecon, he played an active part in town life and was especially keen on sports. He was a keen golfer and bowls player, and Chairman of the Brecon Football Club.

Whilst living in Brecon, he became a prolific artist. He was known especially for his paintings of landscapes and street scenes, and much of his inspiration for his pieces came from the Beacons and the streets and buildings of his beloved Brecon. He was accomplished in watercolours and oils, and produced a plethora of pencil sketches. He was often a familiar sight to locals, heading off to the Beacons with his easel strapped to his back. He would often complete his work back in his studio after initial sketches in the field.

Despite his talent for landscape, Garratt was always conscious that he was not as proficient at drawing figures. It is due to this that very few of his works contain people. To try and improve on what he felt was his 'Achilles heel', he made several visits to Paris in the 1920s, where he took anatomy lessons. It is clear however that he still remained unsatisfied with his technique, as, on returning home, he would often use the backs of these figure drawings to produce more paintings of Breconshire.

Interestingly though, it was to be a painting of an individual which would win Garratt a prize at the 1913 Eisteddfod, held in Abergavenny. The piece; 'King Charles leaving the Priory, Brecon', is set on August 6th 1645. King Charles' links with Brecon stem from his defeat at Naseby, Northamptonshire at one of the key battles of the first English Civil War on June 14th 1645. After this, the King sought asylum in Wales.

Prince Rupert, the King's chief military adviser, urged him to seek peace, as he knew the King was in great peril. The Scots were advancing towards Hereford, so the King was escorted to Brecon where he stayed at the Priory. After spending the night, he made his way to England, where he surrendered to the Scots in April 1946.

He was beheaded in London on 30th January, 1949. The bed that the King reputedly slept in whilst at the Priory is in the collection of Brecknock Museum & Art Gallery.

Towards the end of World War I, Garratt began to develop an interest in etching. In the 1920s, he was helped in the processing of the plates by a young assistant, Mr Bert Price, who had worked in Garratt's shoe factory. His etchings, like his paintings, favoured landscapes and street scenes.

Garratt would travel to the Mediterranean each summer in order to paint. It was the architecture of this region which inspired the design of his house in Brecon. 'The Studio', built in the 1930s, with its flat roof was unusual for Brecon and became a well known building in the town.

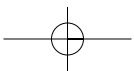
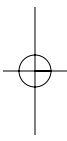
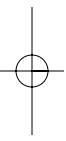
Garratt produced a large number of artworks and exhibited them widely, including the Walker Art Gallery in Liverpool and the Royal Academy of Arts in London. He exhibited here for the first time in 1914. He displayed a work entitled 'Coursing on the Dorset Downs'. He was to use the Dorset Downs once again as his subject for the next Academy showing in 1919. He exhibited a painting of Gibraltar for his third and final exhibition at the Royal Academy in 1935.

He was to live in Brecon for the remainder of his life, some 40 years. Garratt died in Brecon in November 1946 at the age of 82. He was laid to rest at a private funeral on 14th November. Dean Roberts conducted the service at the house and officiated at the graveside in Brecon cemetery. The Brecon & Radnor newspaper, on the 15th November gives details of his funeral and lists the mourners. Sadly, Mrs Garratt had died 22 years before her husband but there were many family members and friends of the artist present. Many wreaths were laid in his memory, one of which was from the South Wales Art Society.

Amongst the mourners were his brother in law, nephew and Mr Pryor. Mr Pryor was to later donate a large collection of pencil sketches and etchings to Brecknock Museum & Art Gallery, a considerable number of which have subsequently been displayed.

Few could have predicted Sam Garratt's success from his humble beginnings. Little did the people of Brecon know that when a small family took over a local boot and shoe business at the beginning of the 20th century, that they were to gain one of their most well-loved artists, a title he still retains to this day.

ABIGAIL KENVYN



TELLING THE TIME IN BRECONSHIRE

This is an attempt to describe the history of telling the time in Breconshire, the growing awareness of time and various ways of measuring it, and some of the notable clocks and clockmakers of the county. It is based on the author's book *Wales: Clocks & Clockmakers* (Mayfield 2003), and subsequent published and unpublished research.

Scratch dials

Apart from some ancient stone circles which are believed to have had an astronomical (and therefore a time-measuring purpose), the oldest surviving time indicators in Britain are the scratch dials which are found on the walls of old churches, many in England and a few in Wales.

Scratch dials, also known as mass dials, are early and simple sun-dials which consisted of several radial lines or peck-marks incised (scratched) on a vertical south-facing stone wall, with a horizontal rod (gnomon) which cast a shadow. The priest was thus able to estimate the proper time at which to summon his flock for services by means of a hand-bell or rope-pulled bell. Only a dozen churches in Wales are known with surviving scratch dials.¹ However, it seems likely that these simple dials were much more common formerly, and that over the centuries many must have been lost as a result of erosion (weathering), whitewashing, neglect, renovation and rebuilding. The only scratch dial recorded in Breconshire is the one incised on the south wall of St Paulinus' church at Llangors. The Llangors dial has fourteen radial lines, and is in very good condition (Fig. 1). Though it is the only surviving scratch dial known in the county, many are known on churches in neighbouring Herefordshire, and a few also on churches in the coastal parts of Glamorgan and Monmouthshire. One vestigial scratch dial has also been recently recorded in Welshpool.



Fig. 1 The scratch dial on the wall of St Paulinus' church, Llangors.

Sundials

Later, so-called 'scientific' sun-dials were developed and these were for centuries the way by which people told the time. Evan Jones of Tyn-y-pant (1850–1928), a Welsh

farmer and antiquary who collected and recorded the history, antiquities, sayings, characters, traditions and customs of his *bro*, the rural parish of Llanwrtyd and the surrounding area, compiled a lot of miscellaneous information on sundials. He wrote in Welsh, recording the fruits of his research in school exercise books, which eventually passed to the safe-keeping of the Welsh Folk Museum (now renamed the National History Museum) at St Fagans.² Part of this vast and unique historical resource, accumulated and written down over many years, has recently been edited and published in book form by the late Herbert Hughes,³ but the papers themselves, and the book, still remain inaccessible to those who cannot read Welsh. Accordingly, I have prepared the following *partial* translation of those pages that deal with sun-dials in Breconshire or more generally (with my interpolations within square brackets), so that readers may enjoy something of Evan Jones, Tyn-y-pant, and his vanished world:

Before there were clocks and watches in our country to show the time, our forefathers' way of knowing the time of day was to stand up straight, and note precisely where the shadow ended, then measure its length by foot, and so get to know quite closely what time of day it was. We see that this custom is very old, and it is referred to in that verse in Job 7:2 'As a servant earnestly desireth the shadow, and as an hireling looketh for the reward of his work'. Another way used by many was to note the sun's shadow on a corner of the house, or on the doorpost, or a table leg, and so they understood very accurately when it was meal time. They also noted when the shadow was directed precisely to the north in order to know when it was mid-day.

Formerly there was a sun-dial in nearly every churchyard throughout our country and the service on the Sabbath was started by its time. As a rule it was put up on the top of a post, or on a stone pillar, near the door of the church. Many of the old account books of our church vestries show records of sums of money spent on repairing dials. In the accounts book of Maesmynys church, Builth, there is a record of the sum of two shillings being paid for repairing the dial in that churchyard in the year 1763. Some dials are still to be seen in various country churchyards. There is one still remaining on the tower of Llanafan Fawr church, Breconshire.

There was also a dial set up in some prominent and convenient place in every town, and also in every village of importance in Wales, and in its time it performed the same service as the town clock in our day. There was also a sun-dial in the graveyards of some country chapels. There is one to be seen today in Maes-yr-onnen churchyard, Radnorshire. Many families also owned a sun-dial, especially the most wealthy and noble families. Generally it was put up in front of the mansion. One is to be seen now facing Pencerrig mansion in Radnorshire.

I heard a story about a dial that was owned long ago by a wealthy family that lived in Nant-gwyllt, near Rhayader, which was on a post in the garden of the mansion. One evening the dial went missing somehow, but very strangely it happened that a stick was found by the post which was recognized as the property of an old labourer belonging to the family. This stick was evidence to cause the old man to be suspected as the thief, and a summons was issued to him on suspicion. The thief then went to consult a lawyer, to

whom he confessed his guilt. The lawyer asked him what sort of stick it was, and he gave him a detailed description of it. Then the lawyer advised him to make another stick exactly the same as it, and the story goes that he succeeded in his plan, as the witnesses failed to give strong enough evidence that it was *his* stick that was found by the post, and the lawyer and the thief went free.

Some people used to have a dial made of stone, very curiously done. In 1907 such a dial was found near Cefn Brân, in the parish of Llanafan Fawr, and judging by its ancient face it was several hundreds of years old. Until the middle of the last century [i.e. presumably about 1850] there was a stone dial at Caerau, Llangamarch. This was set up on top of the large and ancient burial mound near this farmhouse; but by neglect it has been lost for many years now. When the family of Caerau acquired their first clock, old Shôn, like many of the old people in those days, was consumed by strong prejudice against it, and often used to say 'What's that old clock you've got there; it's plenty of work winding it up all the time, and it still goes fast or slow!'

A hundred years ago [i.e. about 1800] a stonecutter used to live in an old cottage at Dolgaer near Llangamarch; and the story goes that he had a very curious stone dial that he had made himself, which he had on a post by his house; and as it was at the side of the road, many travellers going that way called that to this day would turn to it to see the time. In this way this dial became so popular that the place was called 'Greenwich' by virtually everybody, and the old ruin is still called that today.

On small dials which I have seen, the time is not given in more detail than quarter hours; but on some large ones the time is shown as detailed as every five minutes, and minutes are shown. On some dials the four cardinal points are also shown. Generally the faces of the large dials are decorated with English flags, and the picture of the unicorn, skilfully carved by hand, one on each side of the marker [gnomon], and below them there is often that motto in French *Dieu et mon droit*.

In the sixteenth century the custom started of putting sayings on dials, which are so various and beautiful as well as interesting. The following collection shows their nature: 'Come light, visit me'; 'I count time, dost thou?'; 'Light and shadow by turns, but always love'; 'Haste, o haste, thou sluggard, haste/The present is already past.'

On nearly every dial I have seen, there was some motto referring to the hurrying nature of time, or the shortness of life. As they are, like most old words of this kind, generally short, to the point as well as interesting, some of them are given here: 'Time is swift'; 'Life's a bubble'; 'As shadowe so man speedeth'; and others could be recorded, which are as if the words are recited by the dial itself: 'It's later than you think'; 'I'll only count your sunny hours'; 'Tak tint o' Time ere Time tak tint o' thee'.

As a motto seen on some dials says – 'I'll only count your sunny hours', so the dial is not of any value in cloudy weather, nor at night unless the sky is completely clear and the moon is full; accordingly, 'necessity is the mother of invention', which doubtless gave rise to the water-clock [clepsydra], which shows the hours by water running from a vessel, and the hourglass, which shows the time by sand running.

In concluding his essay Evan Jones said that sun-dials did not become customary in places like churchyards, gardens and similar places until the sixteenth century, and that it was about the same time that it first became the custom to put mottoes on them.

Evan Jones also mentioned the field name ‘cae dial’, which occurs on estate maps and O.S. maps in various parts of Wales. This is a hybrid Welsh/English name and shows that there is, or was, a sun-dial in the field, often located before a house or mansion. The name has nothing to do with the Welsh word *dial* (= vengeance, revenge).

It should be noted too that the British Sundial Society maintains a comprehensive data-base recording and illustrating public and privately owned sun-dials throughout the British Isles, including of course Breconshire, and this data-base can be accessed by members of the BSS.

Turret clocks

The earliest mechanical clocks were church clocks, commonly known as turret clocks, which were developed in Europe in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. The design, construction and maintenance of a turret clock represented a considerable financial investment for any mediaeval community, but a public clock was a not only a practical and useful asset but also a prestigious item of which local people could be proud. Turret clocks first appeared in major religious establishments such as cathedrals and abbeys. In Wales there is some debate about the actual location of the noisy black-faced clock so graphically described in a *cywydd* by the celebrated poet Dafydd ap Gwilym in the latter part of the fourteenth century. Indeed it has been suggested that this clock was located at Brecon itself, but Dafydd ap Gwilym described the clock as being *yn ochr y clawdd* (at the side of the dike), and it seems more likely that the clock was at Llanthony Priory, just over the county boundary. Llanthony Priory is certainly very close to Offa’s Dike, and before its dissolution in 1538 the Priory definitely possessed a large turret clock because archaeological excavations at Llanthony in 1978 unearthed a wrought-iron foliot, an important part of a medieval turret clock. This foliot, now on display in Newport Museum & Art Gallery, is one of only a handful of original foliots surviving in Britain (Fig.2). Indeed it is even possible that this old foliot was actually part of the ‘black-faced clock’ described by Dafydd ap Gwilym.⁴

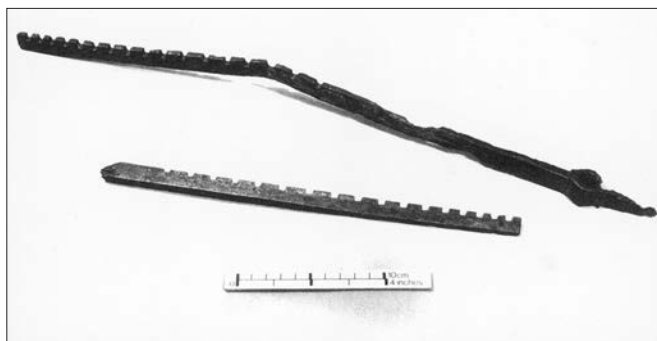


Fig. 2 The broken foliot of the old turret clock at Llanthony Priory, now in Newport Museum & Art Gallery.

Medieval clocks required considerable expenditure to produce and maintain, but as society developed and the knowledge and skills necessary for clock manufacture spread more widely, clocks gradually became more common, first in the larger towns and then more generally. Awareness of time increased as society gradually became more complex and sophisticated. Clock time became important for civic organisation in such matters as the regulation of market trading and licensing hours, and the development of transport links such as stagecoach and ferry services.

The church clock often also served as the town clock. In Breconshire a number of church clocks were evidently installed during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, some of them in comparatively small places. Local parish records in the form of churchwardens' accounts not only show the presence of clocks in many churches but also reveal the difficulty in maintaining them in good running order. John Eisel, in his comprehensive study of the church bells of Breconshire,⁵ noted documentary references in the parish records to clocks in several churches in the county: for example, there was a clock in Brecon cathedral in 1785–1808 but this clock was later removed; St Mary's church in Brecon had a clock as early as 1684–5; a clock was recorded at St Mary's church, Builth, in 1764; St Edward's church, Crickhowell, evidently had a clock well before 1729 when it was described as being 'out of repair'; at St Michael's church, Llanfihangel Brynpabuan, the records state 'the bells and Clock . . . out of reparaire' in 1762; and likewise at St Cynog's church, Defynnog it was recorded that the clock was 'out of repair' in 1765. It is quite likely that other churches in the county also had a clock at some period, but documentary evidence and the clocks themselves have not survived.

During the second half of the eighteenth century it also became fashionable among country gentlemen and private landowners to install a turret clock as an aid to the orderly and efficient running of an estate and its staff. At the larger mansions the turret clock was usually installed in the stable block, as for example at Penpont.

Domestic clocks

Sand-glasses that measured fixed periods of time, for example fifteen minutes or one hour, were in regular use in domestic or work settings, and are often mentioned in accounts or inventories. In England, lantern clocks were widely made and commonly used from the late sixteenth to the early eighteenth century, but very few lantern clocks were ever made in Wales and none in Breconshire. After the invention of the long pendulum and anchor escapement in the second half of the seventeenth century, the long-case clock soon developed as the most accurate timekeeper and remained the favourite domestic clock, in Wales as in England, for some three centuries.

However, the making of domestic clocks developed later and more slowly in Wales than in much of England. Although the will and inventory of Lewis Morgan of Cwrt-y-Gollen in 1697 listed 'one old clocke £1', we can be quite sure that this old clock, whatever it was, had not been actually made in Wales.⁶ Before 1700 only

the wealthy owned domestic clocks, and in Wales such people bought their domestic clocks from English makers, either in London or in border towns such as Chester, Shrewsbury, Hereford, Gloucester or Bristol. No makers of domestic clocks became established anywhere in Wales until the very end of the seventeenth century.⁷

A total of over eighty different clockmakers have been recorded as working in the county of Breconshire during the period from 1700 to the end of the nineteenth century, the main centre of activity being Brecon itself with 26 clockmakers recorded, followed by Bryn-mawr, Builth, Crickhowell, Hay, and the upper Usk valley (Cwm Wysg).⁸ Some of the clockmakers working in the adjacent counties (Radnor, Hereford, Monmouth, Glamorgan, and Carmarthen) also sold some clocks in Breconshire. It should, however, be remembered here that many of the men listed in directories as watchmakers or clockmakers in the second half of the nineteenth century were in fact merely retailers and repairers of clocks and watches, rather than makers in the strict sense of the word.

The accuracy of clocks and watches, and the precision with which they indicated time, improved greatly during the eighteenth century. Whereas the early public clocks had signalled time by the counting the hours and sometimes the quarters, the advent of domestic clocks meant that time could be shown by quarters or half-quarters, then minutes, and ultimately seconds. Accuracy was valued, and for reasons of astrology the precise time of events such the birth of children was often recorded in personal diaries.

However, the manufacture and sale of domestic clocks in the more rural parts was still relatively slow in the first half of the eighteenth century. Evan Jones, Tynypant, described the situation in his home parish of Llanwrtyd;⁹ my translation of his account follows:

Seven score years ago [i.e. towards the end of the eighteenth century] there were only four clocks in the parish of Llanwrtyd. One with Twmi Williams, Esgair-foel Uchaf, who was a freeholder and a farmer comfortably off. This was a 'mute clock', i.e. it did not strike. The second was in Doldyner, with Rees Price, who owned his own farm, a respected man in the parish, and had held the office of churchwarden for some scores of years. The third was in Dol-y-coed, with a wealthy family of the name of Jones. The fourth was in Dinas, with Captain John Lloyd, a wealthy gentleman, who had been for many years the Captain of the *Manship*, a ship belonging to the West Indian Company.

One of the earliest makers of domestic clocks in Wales was Thomas Ban(n)ister who hailed originally from Hereford and established himself as a clockmaker in Brecon High Street in about 1710. He married Rebecca Cruse of Llanddew in 1711, and they had several children baptised at Brecon between 1712 and 1721. Thomas Bannister died in Brecon in 1737, and was buried at St John's (now the Cathedral) on 27 November 1737. Several long-case clocks made by him and signed 'Thos. Bannister Brecon Fecit' survive, and these are among the earliest long-case clocks made in south Wales (Fig. 3, 4). He was the son of Thomas



Fig. 3 A long-case clock by Thomas Bannister of Brecon.



Fig. 4 Detail of the signature on the brass dial of the Bannister clock.

Ban(n)ister (1670–1751) of Hereford, an important and prolific clockmaker who also signed clocks at Weobley and at Norton Canon.¹⁰ Interestingly, Richard Bannister (another son of Thomas Bannister of Hereford, and brother of Thomas Bannister of Brecon) worked for a time during the 1730s at Laugharne where he installed a clock and two dials in the Town Hall, before later returning to Hereford.

Another important family of early clockmakers with Breconshire connections were the Variers of Pont Nedd Fechan and Ystradfellte. The Varier family, variously spelt also as Varrior or Verier, were believed to be Huguenots, though the Huguenot Society cannot confirm this. The antecedents of the family are obscure and their dates and relationships are difficult to verify because few contemporary records exist and later sources are contradictory and unclear. A published eisteddfod essay by T. J. Jones on the history of the parish and village of Aberdare¹¹ mentioned an old single-handed clock dated 1673 signed by George Varier:

Hen awrlais o waith un George Varier, a'r dyddiad 1673 arno; nid oes iddo un mynegfys funudol, ac nid yw yn arddangos llai na chwarter awr.

[An old clock, the work of one George Varier, bearing the date 1673; it has no minute hand, and does not display anything less than the quarter hours.]

This clock belonged to Morgan Dafydd of Aberdare, an old weaver who lived in a house that bore the date 1674 over the door. If this report is correct, then this clock would be the earliest recorded domestic clock made in Wales, and would also make this George Varier the earliest recorded maker of domestic clocks anywhere in Wales. Unfortunately the clock does not appear to have survived the nineteenth century, and there is no other supporting evidence. Although the Welsh description, together with the circumstantial detail about the clock's owner, certainly reads like an accurate first-hand account, the suspicion remains that the date 1673 may simply be a misprint for 1763.

If we are to believe William Thomas the diarist,¹² who actually knew the Varier family, then it would seem that the first member of the family to make clocks was Samuel Varier, described as being English by birth and a Non-juror. Samuel Varier worked for a time in the east of Glamorgan but later in life stayed with his son George who was established as a clockmaker in Pont Nedd Fechan. Samuel Varier, described as 'a short currish sort of man . . . honest in his dealings', used to make periodic tours from Pont Nedd Fechan to clean and repair clocks in east Glamorgan, and it was during one of these tours that he died, aged 70, and was buried at St Fagans on 9 November 1765. William Thomas described the son George Varier who worked at Pont Nedd Fechan as 'a drunken ruinous man' who had twice ended up in jail. Several clocks signed by him are known, one apparently dated 1749, and a dial signed 'G. Verier Pont Neath Vaughan' is in the National History Museum at St Fagans. No clocks signed at Ystradfellte are known. He died in 1782 and is buried in Ystradfellte churchyard. George Varier may also have had a brother named Samuel.

The four generations of clockmakers of Cwm Wysg are of particular interest in the history of clock-making in the county. Because of the gradual change from patronymic to permanent surnames in Wales during the eighteenth century, and the addition of the letter 's' to what was basically a forename, it is sometimes quite difficult to pin down the genealogy of a family,¹³ and the Griffith/Williams dynasty of clockmakers is a good example of this. William Griffith was the first of this family of clockmakers. His full name was Rees William Griffith David, and he was born in 1707 and died in 1786. He signed the dials of his clocks in various ways: 'Gwilym Griffith' or 'William Griffith(s)', usually with abbreviation of the Christian name to Gw., Wm. or Will^m (Fig. 5, 6). He is believed to be the father of Rees Williams (1737–1827), the grandfather of William Williams (1774–1825), and the great-grandfather of Evan Williams and John Williams who were both active as clockmakers in the middle of the nineteenth century. All these men were clockmakers and signed clocks at various places including Trecastell, Defynnog, Llywel, Brecon, and Cwm Wysg, and perhaps also other places such as Sennybridge.

William Griffith himself lived and worked in a small cottage at Cwm Atwedd near Defynnog, but later some of his clockmaking descendants lived and worked at a house called Ynys-fain (Fig. 7), beside the river Usk in the parish of Traean-glas, and still known locally as 'the clockmaker's house' (though now misnamed Ynys-faen). Most if not all of these men were baptised and buried at Llywel church, and some of their gravestones can still be seen in the churchyard there. These were quite prolific clockmakers, and several 30-hour and 8-day long-case clocks made by them are known. Some of their surviving clocks are now in museums, e.g. Brecknock Museum, and the National History Museum, St Fagans. Several other clocks, some with brass dials and some with painted dials, are known in private ownership. Some of their cheaper 30-hour clocks have subsequently been converted to more saleable 8-day clocks by latter-day 'improvers'. One 8-day oak-cased clock with square brass dial signed 'Will^m Griffiths CWM USK' made in about 1760 was sold recently at auction at Leominster.

There is a nice bit of background material on the progenitor of this clockmaking family in a book on the history of Defynnog parish by the local historian D. Craionog Lewis of Forest Cottage, Crai.¹⁴ A century ago he described one of William Griffith's clocks:

arwlaes oedranus iawn . . . o waith un William Griffith, Defynnog . . . yn ddangoseg amwg o ddidwylledd ac onestrwydd celfyddyd. Edrycha heddyw mor ieuanc a serchog yn ei wyneb ag erioed, a'i olwg mor iach a gwrol fel un o gewri yr oesoedd gynt. Nid yw byth yn segur, cerdda yn ei flaen yn ddiorthwys, y nos fel y dydd . . . a chan ei fod yn hen wâs mor ufudd a chywir, rhoir iddo y lle goreu yn y ty, ac edrychir arno fel un o ddodrefn penaf y teulu.

[a very ancient clock . . . the work of one William Griffith of Defynnog . . . an obvious example of simple and honest skill. Its dial seems today as young and delightful as ever, and it looks as sound and manly as one of those giants of ages past. It is never idle, going without resting, night and day . . . and as it is an old, faithful and accurate servant, it is given the best place in the house, and is looked upon as one of the main furniture pieces of the family].



Fig. 5 Long-case clock by William Griffiths of Cwm Wysg, on display at Cilewent farmhouse, at the National History Museum, St Fagans.



Fig 6 Detail of the signature on the silvered brass dial of the Griffiths clock.



Fig. 7 Ynys-fain, the “clockmakers’ house” on the bank of the river Usk.

Another notable Breconshire clockmaker was Richard Watkin(s) who appears to have been a peripatetic maker for he is known to have signed clocks at Llywel, Merthyr Tydfil, Trecastell and Brecon, and also some clocks without any place-name at all. As a watchmaker at Llywel he took on an apprentice James Jones, 15 May 1756, for a standard 7-year apprenticeship, £12 (this James Jones later became an important clockmaker in his own right – see below). Richard Watkin was a prolific clockmaker, and many of his clocks, both the cheaper 30-hour and the more expensive 8-day clocks, survive and are known in museums and in private hands. William Williams, Pantycelyn, the famous hymn-writer, owned one of his clocks, signed ‘Richard Watkin Trecastle’. Two of his clocks, neither of which bears a place-name, are in the National History Museum at St Fagans (Fig. 8), and another is in the Fogg Art Museum of Harvard University, this last one having the inscription ‘Richard Watkins Ceven y Gweision Llywell Brecknockshire’ engraved around the periphery of the dial. Richard Watkin died at Brecon in 1782. In his will he left ‘all my Real Estate in the Town of Brecon or elsewhere to my dear beloved wife Mary’. The probate inventory valued his goods and chattels at £28-12s.-0d. The inventory included three clocks in his shop (valued at £5, £2 and £1 respectively), while his clockmaking tools were valued at £5.

Some time soon after completing his apprenticeship with Richard Watkin in 1763, James Jones established himself as a clockmaker in his own right in Brecon where he was active from about 1767 to 1794. He too was a prolific maker, and

several of his clocks are known, mainly substantial long-case clocks with moon dial or other refinements. One 8-day clock in an oak case of about 1780 has a strike/silent facility, and is on display in Brecknock Museum (on loan from the National History Museum, St Fagans). Another quite exceptional clock made by James Jones for a special and wealthy customer was a musical long-case with a tidal display in the arch showing 'HIGH WATER AT THE NEW PASSAGE'. This was the ferry over the river Severn between Black Rock (Portskewett) and Chessel Pill; this ferry cut the time and distance between South Wales and Bristol, and during the eighteenth century was a fierce competitor of the Old Passage ferry (Beachley-Aust). This particular clock had a 5-pillar 3-train movement with a musical pin barrel playing with 16 hammers striking on 8 bells, plus a further hour bell. It was presumably made for a special customer in Brecon who needed to make frequent journeys to Bristol.



Fig. 8 Long-case clock by Richard Watkin on display in the kitchen of Kennixton farmhouse, at the National History Museum, St Fagans.

Another notable clockmaker in Brecon at the end of the eighteenth century was Joshua Jones who had served a 7-year apprenticeship with an Abergavenny clockmaker by the name of Theophilus Jones.

At Trefeca the self-sufficient religious community or 'family of converts' (*teulu Trefeca*) set up by Howell Harris in 1752 included skilled craftsmen, among whom was at least one clockmaker. Of the three clocks now displayed at Trefeca, two are believed to have been made by members of the community in the early years. One of these is a tall brass-dial long-case clock, unsigned, of about 1755, with a large sunburst engraved in the arch. The other is a massive turret clock made in 1754 and originally with two octagonal dials. In 1854 this turret clock was repaired by Władysław Spiridion, a Polish clockmaker who had sought asylum in Britain and became one of the leading clockmakers in Cardiff. It is interesting that this repair work should have been entrusted to a clockmaker living so far away from Trefeca, when in fact there was an old clockmaker actually resident in Trefeca itself. James Bufton, clockmaker, buried his wife Margaret, aged 62, at Trefeca on 5 April 1851 (*Hereford Journal* 16 April 1851). We can only assume that James Bufton was then too old to take on the work. Incidentally, Joseph Harris the astronomer and brother of Howell Harris, came to Trefeca to observe the transit of Venus for the Royal Observatory at Greenwich. He set up his meridian at Trefeca, and observed the transit on 6 June 1761 using telescope, stop-watch and a clock (perhaps one of the two mentioned above), and then worked out the longitude of Trefeca.

It is not always possible to determine the relationship of men having similar or identical names, as shown by the case of John Lloyd of Brecon. Two men having this name, John Lloyd, signed painted-dial clocks at Brecon between the 1790s and 1840. They were presumably father and son, and the son may have been the John Lloyd who signed for a 7-year apprenticeship with Daniel Williams in Builth, 28 June 1803.

Scenting freedom from oppression and commercial opportunity abroad, many foreign clockmakers, especially from the Black Forest area of Germany, emigrated and settled in the industrial towns and valleys of South Wales during the nineteenth century, but rural Breconshire was not attractive to them. Several foreign clockmakers worked in Bryn-mawr in the second half of nineteenth century (Joseph Fresemeyer, Aristide Poterel Maison, and Joseph Schwer), but the only German clockmakers recorded in Brecon were Maximilian & Kaltenbach who worked briefly in the town, being recorded in the Struet in 1844.

By the middle of the nineteenth century, the long-case clock was beginning to go out of fashion. Though still often regarded as a cherished family heirloom, it was supplanted by smaller and cheaper clocks, mainly wall clocks and mantle clocks, imported from the USA, Germany and France. Mass-produced watches, costing much less than those made in England, were also imported in large numbers from the USA, and were within the reach of most working men. The day of the trained individual clockmaker was passing, and self-styled clockmakers and watchmakers were increasingly becoming mere retailers and repairers.

One of the men whose working career spanned the period of change from clockmaking to retailing was William Williams of Brecon (born c. 1772, died 1852). His obituary was as follows: 'Deaths. Sept. 19, aged 80, deeply regretted by his relatives and friends, Mr. William Williams, watchmaker, Brecon. The deceased had been for nearly 60 years an inhabitant and tradesman of the town, and filled for a number of years the office of inspector of weights and measures for the county of Brecon, and was deservedly respected by all who knew him' (*Hereford Journal* 29 Sept. 1852).

Among the last of the local traditional clockmakers was John Hando of Brecon (1855–1919). During his career John Hando sold many domestic clocks in Brecon, and examples of these bearing his name are still quite commonly seen in private homes in the town and the surrounding district. Most of these clocks were cheap imported American and German wall clocks and mantle clocks. One of his clocks is still in the market, and fittingly, a nicely restored movement of a small turret clock made by him greets visitors at the entrance to Brecknock Museum.

Acknowledgements

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Notes

¹ W. Linnard 'Welsh scratch dials' *Arch. Camb.* 156 (2007) 141–7.

² National History Museum, St Fagans. Archive, Mss. 1793/1–654; 2038/1–137; 2129/1–2; 2384/1–186. The sun-dial material is Ms. 1793/259–377 xxxvi, and xli.

³ Herbert Hughes (editor), *Cymru Evan Jones: detholiad o bapurau Evan Jones, Ty'n-y-pant, Llanwrtyd* [Evan Jones's Wales: a selection of the papers of Evan Jones, Ty'n-y-pant, Llanwrtyd], Gomer, Llandysul. 2009. The sun-dial information is on pp. 236–9.

⁴ W. Linnard, 'The foliot turret clock at Llanthony' *Antiq. Horol.* 2004, 240–4.

⁵ J. C. Eisel. *The Church Bells of Breconshire*, 2002.

⁶ A. R. Hawkins. *Cwrt-y-Gollen and its families*, 1967.

⁷ W. Linnard. *Wales: Clocks & Clockmakers* (Mayfield Books, 2003).

⁸ Linnard op. cit.

⁹ *Gardd Aberdar* 1854, p. 82.

¹⁰ Hughes, op. cit. p. 238.

¹¹ T. Branson & J. C. Eisel. *Herefordshire Clockmakers & Watchmakers*, 2005

¹² R. T. W. Denning (editor), *The Diary of William Thomas 1762–1795*, South Wales Record Society 1995.

¹³ J. & S. Rowlands, *The Surnames of Wales*, 1996, p. 26–7.

¹⁴ D. Craionog Lewis, *Hanes Plwyf Defynnog*, 1911, p. 66–7.

Y CLOC

Roedd Dafydd ap Gwilym, ein bardd mwyaf erioed, ac un o feirdd godidowcaf Ewrop y Canoloesoedd, yn gyfarwydd â Brycheiniog, ac mae'n bosibl bod dwy gerdd o'i waith wedi'u lleoli yn ein hardal ni: *Trafferth mewn Tafarn*, a'r gerdd a atgynhychir yma – *Y Cloc* – i gydfynd gyda'r erthygl ar glocwyr Brycheiniog. Dyma'n cofnod barddonol gynharaf o'r ddyfeis, yn gydoedol â cherdd arall gan y bardd Ffrangeg Jean Froissart ryw bryd cyn 1370. Ymddangosodd y clociau cynharaf ym Mhrydain tua diwedd y 13^{es} Ganrif ac yma ym Mrycheiniog y gwelodd Dafydd gloc am y tro cyntaf erioed, naill ai yn Aber-rheon, bellach yn dwmpath ar lannau Wysg ger Penpont, neu ym Mhriordy Aberhonddu, yr Eglwys Gadeiriol bellach. Mae'n disgrifio'r ddyfais newydd â diddordeb a manylder mawr, er yn ei wawdio hefyd am dorri ar draws ei freuddwyd y mae'n ei anfon fel 'llatai' neu negesydd at ei gariad sydd yn cysgu yn nhref Aberhonddu gerllaw. Mae'n ddadleuol ai Crog Aberhonddu yw'r 'eang eilun' yn y gerdd – o bosib, mae'r gerdd yn rhy gynnar am y ddelw o Grist ar y Groes yn y Priordy.

Cynnar fodd, cain arfeddyd,
Canu'dd wyf fi, can hawdd fyd,
I'r dref wiw ger Rhiw Rheon
Ar gwr y graig, a'r gaer gron.
Yno, gynt ei henw a gad,
Y mae dyn a'm adwaeniad.
Hawddamor heddiw yma
Hyd yn nhyddyn y ddyn dda.
Beunoeth, foneddigdoeth ferch,
Y mae honno i'm hannerch.

Y CLOC

Dafydd ap Gwilym, born circa 1320, our greatest Welsh poet, and one of mediaeval Europe's most illustrious, was familiar with the Brecon area, and it is in this region that he saw his first clock, either at Aber-Rheon, now a mound on the banks of the Usk, near Penpont or at St John's Priory in Brecon, now the Cathedral. This must rank amongst the earliest poetic records in Europe of the device which first appeared in Britain in the third quarter of the 14th Century. Dafydd's poem is contemporary with another poem on a clock in French written by Jean Froissart some time before 1370. In the poem, it is the clock that disturbs his reverie and evokes his anger, when he sends his dream as a messenger to an old flame sleeping in Brecon nearby. His description of the workings of the clock is very exact, showing that this man of great intellect had indeed examined such a machine in great detail. Whether or not the 'broad image' is in fact the Golden Rood in the Priory must be debatable, as the poem is possibly too early for that great image of Christ Crucified.

Editor's translation:

In cheerful mood, and fair inclined
All well with my world, I sing
To that fine town near Rheon's steep ground
By rock and fortress round.
There dwells a girl whom once I knew,
High esteemed in times gone by.
Go, my dream, this very day
Go to her dwelling her to greet.
Each night that wise and noble girl
comes into my dreams me to meet.

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Bryd cwsg dyn, a bradw y'i caid,
 Breuddwyd yw, braidd y dywaid,
 A'm penn ar y gobennydd,
 Acw y daw cyn dydd,
 yng ngolwg eang eilun,
 Angel bach yng ngwely bun.
 Tybiaswn o'm tyb isod
 Gan fy mun gynnu fy mod.
 Pell oedd rhyngof, cof a'i cais,
 A'i hwyneb pan ddihunais.

Och i'r cloc yn ochr y clawdd
 Du ei ffrw a'm deffroawdd.
 Difwyn fo'i ben a'i dafod
 A'i ddwy raff iddo a'i rod,
 A'i bwysau, pelennau pŵl,
 A'i fuarthau a'i fwrthwl,
 A'i hwyaid yn tybiaid dydd,
 A'i felinau aflonydd.
 Cloc anfwyn mal clec ynfyd
 Cobler brwysg, cabler ei bryd.
 Coluddyn ffals celwyddawg,
 Cenau ci yn cnöi cawg.
 Mynychglap, mewn mynachglos,
 Melin ŵyll yn malu nos.
 A fu sadler crwper crach
 Neu deiler anwadalach?
 Oer ddilen ar ei ddolef
 Am fy nwyn yma o nef!

Cael ydd oeddwn, coel ddiiddos,
 Hun o'r nef am hanner nos,
 Ym mhlygau hir freichiau hon,
 Ym mhleth Deifr ymhlith dwyfron.
 A welir mwy, alar maeth,
 Wlad Eigr, ryw weledigaeth?

Eto rhed ati ar hynt,
 Freuddwyd, ni'th dwg afwrwydynt.
 Gofyn i'r dyn dan aur do
 A ddaw hun iddi heno
 I roi golwg, aur galon,
 Nith yr haul, unwaith ar hon.

Brycheiniog

When a man falls asleep – need it be said? –
 A dream comes as delusion,
 With my head on the bedclothes.
 She appears before day doth dawn
 In sight of the broad image,
 An angel in a girl's bed.
 From my base desire I thought
 I might be with my love of yore.
 But we were far apart, my mind straining
 To glimpse her face when so rudely was I
 awoken.

O black faced clock set high in the wall
 You it was who woke me.
 Cursed be both your mouth and tongue
 Your two ropes and your wheel,
 Your weights, dull-witted balls,
 Your casements and your hammer,
 Your nodding ducks who think it day
 Your restless turning cogwheels.
 You hateful clock of foolish chatter
 You drunken cobbler of blaspheming mind
 With false mendacious innards –
 A dog's whelp chewing at a bowl.
 Unbroken noise in monastery close,
 Mill of darkness grinding the night.
 Was ever scabby-bottomed saddler
 or tiler any more fickle?
 Let cold pour down on its mournful cry
 For dragging me from my Heaven!

In cosy trust I did enjoy
 At midnight sleep from heaven
 In this girl's long enfolding arms
 Her breasts like Arthur's maiden
 Oh woe, will ever come again
 A vision of Eigr of this land?

My Dream, run back to her again,
 No wasted journey this for thee
 Ask that girl of golden hair
 If sleep will come to her tonight
 So I may see, oh heart of gold,
 This niece of sun once more.

CARTREF Y TEULU YN NHREFECA

An English translation of this article concerning the establishment and day to day running of Howell Harris's Community at Trefeca is available on the Society's website:
<http://www.brecknocksociety.co.uk>

Mae'r blynyddoedd 1735 a 1750 yn rhai nodedig yn hanes crefyddol Sir Frycheiniog a Chymru. Ym 1735, cafodd Howell Harris droedigaeth a fu'n symbyliad i gychwyn y diwygiad crefyddol a elwir yn gyffredinol y Diwygiad Methodistiaidd. Ym 1750, torrodd Howell Harris ei gysylltiad â'r mudiad hwnnw gan droi i sefydlu 'Y Cartref' i'r 'Teulu' yn Nhrefeca. Eleni, mae'r Cyfundeb Methodistiaidd, Eglwys Bresbyteraidd Cymru erbyn hyn, yn dathlu dau gan mlynedd ei ymraniad o Eglwys Lloegr, a pheth purion yw atgoffa ein hunain o ran allweddol Sir Frycheiniog â'r cysylltiadau yma.

Erbyn 1750, yr oedd Howell Harris wedi ei ddarnladd gan y mynych deithio, y pregethu diddiwedd a'r erlid a ddiodefodd mewn llawer man wrth bregethu'r Efengyl. Pe bai ond am hynny, buasai ei iechyd wedi para iddo ymatal, ond nid gŵr i ymroi i segurddod oedd Harris, ac fe drodd yr amgylchiad yn gyfle i sylweddoli breuddwyd oedd wedi ei ddiddori ers 1732. Tra yn ŵr ifanc, bu'n gweithio fel athro yng nghylch Trefeca, yn Llangasty yn bennaf. Parodd ei droedigaeth dan weinidogaeth y Parch. Pryce Davies, ficer Talgarth, iddo anesmwytho a chwilio am faes ehangach i'w wasanaeth. Ym mis Mai 1736, clywodd am Griffith Jones, Llanddowror, arloeswr yr ysgolion elusenol cylchynol, trwy ei gysylltiad â'r Parch. Thomas Jones, Cwm Iau mae'n debygol. Ar fod yn offeiriad yr oedd bryd Harris, ond gan nad oedd yn fodlon dilyn y llwybr arferol i gymhwyso ei hun i hynny, cynghorodd Griffith Jones ef i gadw ymlaen fel athro, ond i ehangu ei faes trwy oruchwylio amryw o'i ysgolion oedd erbyn hyn wedi ymestyn i Sir Frycheiniog. Rhaid pwysleisio yma ddiddordeb Harris mewn addysg o'r cychwyn.

Ym mis Rhagfyr 1736, clywodd am sefydliad yn Fulneck, Swydd Efrog, a gychwynwyd gan y Morafiaid ar batrwm sefydliad cyffelyb yn Halle, yn Sachsen/Saeswyn yn yr Almaen, a gynhwysai ysgolion i blant. Mae'n bosibl mai Griffith Jones trwy ei gysylltiad â Syr John Phillipps, Castell Pictwn, Sir Benfro, a ymddiddorai yn y mudiad Pietistaidd a ddeilliodd o'r ffynhonell yma, a enynodd ddiddordeb Harris mewn sefydlu cynllun tebyg yn Nhrefeca. Felly, yr oedd y syniad o sefydlu'r Cartref ym mwriad Harris ers 1736. O edrych yn ôl dros ei fywyd yn ei hunan-gofiant a gyhoeddwyd ym 1791, sonia am *'having an impression in my mind for some years past, that he should build a house for God'*. Ar ôl hir bendroni ynghylch ei ddyfodol, daeth i'r casgliad *'that God would settle me so as I may be useful to Him . . . I resolv'd to lay £200 to build an Almshouse and school house to instruct and teach self and to employ as many as I could of firm zealots to teach'*.¹ Cyn iddo gario'r bwriad allan fodd bynnag, cyfarfu â Daniel Rowland ym 1737, gan benderfynu cydweithio i efengyleiddio Cymru trwy bregethu'r Gair a sefydlu seiadau o blith y rhai a

argyhoeddwyd, y gyntaf yn Y Wernos ym 1738. Nid oes galw yma am olrhain hanes y diwygiad crefyddol a ledodd trwy Gymru gyfan hyd 1750. Erbyn hynny yr oedd yn amlwg i Harris nad oedd pethau'n mynd fel y dymunai gan fod gwrthwynebiad i'w ymgais i reoli'r mudiad, yn enwedig o gyfeiriad offeiriaid ordeiniedig fel Daniel Rowland. O achos hynny, blinodd Harris ar y rhwystredigaeth, a honnodd fod bwriad Duw yn cael ei lesteirio yn ogystal â'i ewyllys ef ei hun. Profodd ddadrithiad, ac ymwahanodd oddiwrth ei gyd-weithwyr gan droi at ei fwrriad cynnar i sefydlu cymuned o bobl a ddenwyd i Drefeca oedd wedi eu hargyhoeddi gan ei bregethu. Yr oedd yn argyhoeddiedig mai gwneud gwaith Duw yr oedd trwy sefydlu cymuned theocratig gyda Duw yn ben arni, a'i Air yn rheol bywyd iddynt, dan gyfarwyddyd Harris fel ei was. Honnai fod '*everything done at Trefeca is by Christ's Will*'.²

Cyfrifwyd gweithred Harris yn torri i ffwrdd oddiwrth y mudiad Methodistaidd i sefydlu'r Cartref yn Nhrefeca fel cam gwag gan haneswyr. Williams, Pantycelyn, roddodd fynegiant i'r cyhuddiad trwy ddisgrifio Harris yn cilio i'w '*fonachlog fawr*'. Agwedd negyddol hollol yw hynny, gan mai nid ymddeol oddiwrth un gorchwyl i hamddena, ond manteisio ar ei gyfle i sylweddoli breuddwyd gynnar, lle y cai dragwyddol heol i weithio allan ei syniadau ei hun. Nid oes neb, am a wn i, wedi awgrymu y gallai hyn fod wedi bod yn un achos o leiaf paham y gwahanodd Harris oddiwrth ei gyd-arweinwyr ym 1750. Nid cyfaddefiad o fethiant oedd hynny o gwbl ond agoriad i faes newydd ac arbrofol na ddychmygodd neb cynt mohono yng Nghymru. Roedd sel ac ymrwyniad Harris i'r gwaith yn warant i'w lwyddiant, a thystiolaeth o hynny yw iddo bara i ffynu ar ôl ei farwolaeth ym 1773.

Yn ôl Evan Moses a gadwai ddyddiadur, ar ôl marw Madam Sidney Griffith y dechreuwyd adeiladu yn Nhrefeca Fach ar ôl dymchwel hen gartref Harris a'i fam. Ond yr oedd Madam Griffith yno pan osodwyd y garreg sylfaen ganddi, yn cael ei ddilyn gyda gweddi am ei lwyddiant. Yr oedd wedi cymuno swm o £400 i Harris at y gwaith, ond bu farw ymhen deufis ac ataliwyd yr arian gan ei brawd, Watkin Wynne o'r Foelas, Sir Ddinbych. Er nad oedd ganddo sicrwydd am arian, aeth Harris â'r gwaith o adeiladu ymlaen yn yr hyder y gwnai Duw ddarparu. Disgwyliid i bob person a ymunai â'r Teulu drosglwyddo ei eiddo i'r gronfa gyffredin.

Hynny a wnaeth Sarah Bowen o'r Tyddyn, Llanidloes, pan ymunodd, gyda swm o £280 a fu'n achos cynnen yn ddiweddarach. Bu Harris yn ffodus i ddenu nifer o grefftwyr da i'r Teulu, a hwy a wnaeth yr adeiladu a aeth ymlaen hyd 1759. Harris ei hun oedd y pensaer, ac yr oedd yn amlwg ei fod wedi sylwi ar geinder adeiladwaith pan ar ymweliadau â Llundain a Chaerfaddon trwy ei gysylltiad â'r Arglwyddes Huntingdon. Sioraidd oedd yr arddull a ddewisodd, ond yr oedd rhyw arlliw o'r dull Gothig yn y ffenestri Fenisaidd. Nodwedddion amlwg oedd y balconi, ciwpolâ, deial haul, cloc mawr, gyda cheiliog gwynt uwchben y tŵr, gydag angel yn chwythu utgorn arian a'r arysgrif dano '*Cyfodwch feirw, a dewch i'r Farn*'. Credai Harris fod glanweithdra yn nesaf i dduwioldeb ac ychwanegodd fath-oer. Talodd sylw i'r amgylchedd trwy blannu gerddi blodau gyda llwybrau i rodio. Canmolodd

John Wesley'r tŷ a'r amgylchedd fel paradwys fechan. Nid felly Benjamin Heath Malkin a ymwelodd â Threfeca ar ei daith trwy dde Cymru ym 1803. '*Here a Gothic Arch! There a Corinthian capital! Towers, battlements and bastions! Peacocks cut in box, and lions hacked in holly! Who has then deluged his native county with such bad taste*'.³ Mae'r ebychiadau yn awgrymu anghymeradwyaeth o gymysgedd pensaernïaeth Harris ond yn rhoi disgrifiad manwl o'r hyn oedd wedi goroesi Harris ei hun. Nododd cynorthwywr Pevsner yr adeilad gyda mwy o werthfawrogiad.⁴

Aeth y gwaith o adeiladu ymlaen yn gyflym, ac erbyn 1759 yr oedd saith ystafell ar y llawr a saith ar y llofft wedi eu gorffen. Adeiladwyd gweithdai i'r crefftwyr, popty i ddiwallu'r teulu, clafdy ar gyfer pobl sâl, a chapel ym 1758. Pan benderfynodd yr Arglwyddes Huntingdon agor coleg gerllaw yn Nhrefeca Isaf, ail-ddechreuwyd ar adeiladu ym 1765, ac erbyn 1772 yr oedd yr adeilad cyfan ar ffurf tri thŷ yn cynnwys 70 ystafell, 21 wedi eu neilltuo at iws y foneddiges a'i gosgordd.⁵

Yr oedd felly digon o lety i'r teulu cynyddol oedd wedi tyfu o tua 60 person erbyn 1753 i tua 100 erbyn 1755, rhai o fewn deg teulu yn eu mysg. Yr oedd y cynnydd yn y Teulu mor gyflym fel y bu raid i Harris gymeryd rhai ffermydd cyfagos ar rent i letya'r gorlif. Yr oedd cryn dipyn o fynd a dod gan na allai rhai ddygymod â disgyblaeth lem Harris, a beirniadwyd ef gan rai, Simon Lloyd yn eu plith, o fod yn greulon. Ateb Harris i hynny oedd fod pawb yn rhydd i ymadael os mynnent, ond ni allai fod pethau cynddwrwg oherwydd dychwelodd rhai oedd wedi ymadael. Wedi'r cyfan, yr oedd yno sicrwydd o lety a bwyd a chwmnïaeth, pethau amheuthun yng Nghymru dlawd, a phawb yn ddibynnol ar Harris i ddiwallu eu hangen. Haedda Harris glod am drefnu cymdeithas gydweithredol ffyniannus ac unigryw, a hynny gryn ganrif cyn i Robert Owen gario allan ei arbrofion yn New Lanark ac America.

Yr oedd popeth yn y Cartref wedi ei drefnu hyd at raglen feunyddiol i bob aelod. Cariai'r gwragedd lawer o'r baich ac yr oedd Harris yn ystyriol o hynny trwy eu rhoi dan reolaeth meistres, Sarah Bowen yn gyntaf, ac ar ôl iddi ymadael i briodi Simon Lloyd, ei chwaer Hannah. Pan briododd Sarah ym 1755, ceisiodd gan Harris ad-daliad o'r £280 yr oedd wedi cyfrannu i'r gronfa ond gwrthwynebodd Harris, gan bledio mai i Dduw ac nid iddo ef yr oedd wedi cyfrannu. Gorfu i John Evans, hen gyfaill Thomas Charles, ddod i lawr o'r Bala i gymedroli a chafwyd cytundeb.⁶ Er hynny, condemnïai Harris hwynt am iddynt droi eu cefnau ar Drefeca fel '*ildio i ysbryd y byd*', gan mai Duw a'u dygodd yno. Wedi hyn, bu Hannah yn feistres ar y tŷ am gryn bymtheg mlynedd, a mynych y ffrwgdw rhyngddi hi a Harris. Ar fwy nag un achlysur, ffodd i Fryste ac, ym 1759, gorfu i Harris fynd i'w nôl, y ddau yn dychwelyd ar gefn yr un ceffyl. Parhaodd yng ngwasanaeth Harris hyd 1758, pryd yr ymadawodd i sefyllfa gyffelyb yng Ngholeg yr Arglwyddes Huntingdon. Yr oedd gwraig Harris yn flin o'i cholli gan iddi fod yn gyfaill da iddi.

Penodid un o'r gwragedd i ofalu am y plant, rhyw 30 ohonynt, a merch Harris yn eu plith. Codid y plant am chwech o'r gloch y bore i frecwest ar ôl noswyllo y noson gynt am wyth o'r gloch. Treulient ran o'r dydd yn cael addysg ar batrwm ysgolion Griffith Jones mae'n debygol, ac ychwanegid dysgu canu Salmau, a

chwyddent y côr yn eglwys Talgarth ar y Sul. Disgwylid iddynt weithio ar oriau segur oherwydd credai Harris fod y diafol yn darparu gwaith i ddwylo segur. Yr oedd Harris yn ddisgyblwr llym a rhoddodd gweir reit gas i grwt am ddweud celwydd. Ei amcan oedd plannu ymwybod o gyfrifoldeb yn y plant.

Yr oedd rhaid i'r gymuned fod yn hunan-gynhaliol gan nad oedd arian yn dod i mewn o unrhyw gyfeiriad. Y galw cyntaf oedd am gynhaliaeth i'r Teulu niferus ac felly, yr oedd amaethu a garddio yn rhan hanfodol o'r gwaith. I'r diben yma, gweithiai Harris chwe fferm yn ymestyn i 765 erw, yn rhannol, tir wedi ei gymeryd ar rent gan stadau fel Tregynter, a brynasid gan ei frawd Thomas. Codid amrywiaeth o gnydau megis gwenith, barlys, yd, tatw, erfyn a phys, sy'n dangos dylanwad y chwyldro amaethyddol oedd ar droed ar hynny o bryd. Yr oedd gan Howell, fel ei frawd Joseph, ddiddordeb mawr mewn amaethu gwyddonol, a chariwyd arbrofion ymlaen i wella brid anifeiliaid yn ogystal â chnydau. Pan glywodd Harris fod dull amgenach o drin tir yn Swydd Henffordd, danfonodd Evan Roberts, y goruchwyliwr gwaith yno i ymholi.

Diddordeb Howell Harris mewn amaethu a arweiniodd at sefydlu Cymdeithas Amaethyddol Brycheiniog, y gyntaf yng Nghymru, trwy iddo lwyddo i droi clwb yfed a gloddesta a fynychid gan foneddigion y sir i bwrpas mwy defnyddiol. Prif amcan y Gymdeithas oedd hyrwyddo amaethyddiaeth a chrefftau gwlad er lles y sir ac yn enwedig i roi gwaith i'r tlodion. Ym marn Charles Powell o Gastell Madog, amcenid eu gwneud yn Gristnogion a dinasyddion da. Ar gynnig Syr Edward Williams o Langoed, etholwyd Harris yn aelod anrhydeddus i'r Gymdeithas ym 1756. Gwnaeth amaethu Trefeca ei ôl ar safonau ffermio yn y sir, ond nid heb godi peth cenfigen, a beuid Trefeca am y prisiau bwyd uchel yn yr ardal.

Cyn hir, yr oedd chwe deg o grefftau gwlad yn cael eu gweithio yn Nhrefeca gan fod cynifer o grefftwyr wedi sefydlu yno. Yr oedd y seiri maen a choed dan ofal James Pritchard, ac ennillent glod ymhobman am eu gwaith oblegid, os nad oedd pwysau gwaith yn Nhrefeca, llogid hwy allan i gymdogion. Mewn llythyr diolch at Harris, canmolodd Syr Edward Williams, Langoed, ei weithwyr fel dynion sobr, tawel a gonest. Roedd eu hymddygiad meddai yn gredyd i'r egwyddorion crefyddol yr oedd Harris yn mynd i gymaint trafferth i argraffu arnynt. Aeth y sôn amdanynt hyd Sir Fynwy, lle y clywodd y meistr haearn Capel Hanbury amdanynt, a gwahodd Harris i ymgymryd ag adeiladu ffordd dyrpeg yn ei ardal, ond gwrthododd.

Gwneud brethyn a werthid mewn marchnadoedd mor bell â Chaer a thu hwnt, a ddôl â'r rhan fwyaf o arian i'r Teulu. Yma eto, yr oedd Harris yn arloeswr yn y modd yr oedd yn trefnu gwaith o gynhyrchu, gan ddwyn yr holl orchwyllion perthynol o dan yr un to gan greu y ffactri gyntaf erioed i'w sefydlu yng Nghymru. Roedd ar y blaen hyd yn oed nag Adam Smith, yr athronydd Albanaidd, a annogai '*division of Labour*' fel y dull mwyaf economaidd o gynhyrchu.⁷ Dull Harris oedd dosbarthu'r gwaith rhwng wyth yn nyddu, pedwar yn cribo, un yn pwysu'r gwlan a'i baratoi, un yn dirwyn edafedd, a phedwar gwehydd. Hoffai Harris arbrofi i gynhyrchu brethyn llydan uwch ei bris, ond cynghorwyd ef fod y gwlan a ddefnyddiai

yn rhy gwrs i hynny. Tynnodd Howell ei frodyr Joseph a Thomas i mewn i chwilio am farchnadoedd yn Lloegr i'w gynnyrch. Yr oedd Harris am i bawb weithio'n llawen ac yn ôl ei allu, ac i ymostwng i'w ddisgyblaeth yn ufudd. Wedi sylwi ar y drefn yn Nhrefeca y canodd Williams, Pantycelyn, yn ei farwnad i Harris:

Ac ti wnest dy blant yn ufudd,
At eu galwad bod yrun,
Byw i'th reol, byw i'th gyfraith,
Byw i'th olau di dy hun.

Neilltuid rhan o'r dydd i bob gorchwyl. Codid yn y bore am bedwar ac, wedi brechwast, traddodid siars gan Harris. Am chwech, aent allan i weithio tan ddeuddeg pan ddychwelent i wasanaeth arall cyn cinio am un. Am wyth, danfonid y plant i'w gwely wedi swper ac eisteddai'r Teulu i swper am hanner awr wedi wyth cyn noswyllo ar ôl gwasanaeth arall gyda Harris yn holi pob un am gyflwr ei ysbryd. Cyngorai Harris am ddwy neu dair awr bob dydd gan argraffu ar bawb fod popeth a wneid er gogoniant i Dduw ac, am hynny yn hawlio gorau pawb. *Laborare est orare* oedd ei arwyddair. Nid rhyfedd fod Evan Moses yn credu fod Duw wedi neilltuo Trefeca iddo'i hun.

Menter arall o du Harris oedd gosod gwasg argraffu i fyny o arian a gyfrannodd Barbara Parry i'r drysorfa.⁸ Mae'n debyg fod ym mwriad Harris i gyhoeddi ei ddyddiaduron a chadwai ysgrifennydd i groniclo popeth. Ni ddaeth i ben yn ystod ei oes, ond bu'n sylfaen i'r hunan gofiant a gyhoeddwyd ym 1791 ar ôl ei farwolaeth. Cynnyrch cyntaf y wasg oedd argraffu hysbysebion Cymdeithas Amaethyddol Brycheiniog mor gynnar â 1758. Ei chyfnod mwyaf blodeuog oedd o 1770 hyd 1805, pan y cyhoeddwyd dros gant o weithiau gan i'r wasg bara i argraffu ar ôl marw Harris ym 1773. Y gorchwyl mwyaf a ymgymerodd oedd argraffu Beibl Peter Williams a arweiniodd i'w ddiarddel gan y Methodistiaid, ond ni frwyd bai ar Drefeca. Gweithred mwy mentrus oedd argraffu rhai rhifynau o Gylchgrawn Cymraeg Morgan John Rhys cyn iddo ffoi i America, yr hyn a barodd mawr bryder i Evan Moses.⁹

Gwelir felly fod y Cartref yn Nhrefeca yn arbrawf hollol unigryw yng Nghymru, ac nid am iddo fethu y gwnaeth Harris ail-ymuno ag arweinwyr y Methodistiaid ym 1762 ar eu gwahoddiad taer, a mwy neu lai ar ei delerau ei hun. Ond ni fu mor egnïol yn y gwaith o deithio o amgylch i efengylu â chyn 1750. Sylweddolodd ei freuddwyd cynnar i sefydlu cymuned theocrataidd oedd yn ogystal yn llwyddiant yn y byd ymarferol. Profodd Harris ei hun yn ddyn busnes llwyddiannus yn ogystal â bod yn arloeswr mewn amaethyddiaeth. Bu'n flaenllaw mewn sefydlu cymdeithas amaethyddol gynnar ac mewn gosod ffactri i fyny cyn neb arall. Ar ôl 1765, trodd at ddiddordeb arall, sef addysg y weinidogaeth, gan fod addysg yn ddiddordeb oesol iddo. Ef fu'n foddion i osod coleg yr Arglwyddes Huntingdon i fyny, ac er na phenodwyd ef yn bennaeth arno, ef trwy ei ofal drosto fu ei angor mwyaf sefydlog

tan ei farw ym 1773. Cariodd y Teulu ymlaen dan dri ymddiriedolwr, Evan Moses, Evan Roberts a James Pritchard. Pan ddaeth y sefydliad i ben ym 1837, daeth yr eiddo i ddwylo'r Cyfundeb Methodistiaidd i agor ysgol i hyfforddi gweinidogion yno.

E. D. EVANS

Nodiadau

- ¹ Llyfrgell Genedlaethol Cymru, *Archif Trefeca*, Dyddiadur rhif 18, t. 10, 10 Ionawr 1736–7.
- ² Schlenter, B. S. a White, E. M., *Calendar of Trevecka Letters*, t. 352, rhif 2061 ('TL' isod).
- ³ Malkin, B. H., *The Scenery, Antiquities and Biographies of South Wales*, 1807.
- ⁴ *Buildings of Wales – Powys* ed. B. Haslam, cyfres Pevsner.
- ⁵ Davies, K. Monica, *Teulu Trefeca yn Hanes Methodistiaeth Galfniaidd Cymru*, Gol. G. M. Roberts. Caernarfon 1973, tt. 358–377.
- ⁶ Schlenter a White, op. cit, t. 360, No. 2106.
- ⁷ Smith, Adam, *The Wealth of Nations*, 1776.
- ⁸ Schlenter a White, *ibid.*, t. 395, No. 2354.
- ⁹ Owens, A. W., *The Printing Press*, CCHMC 3 t. 67.

BRECKNOCK OVERSEAS

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



Saint John Lloyd

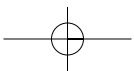
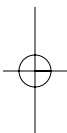
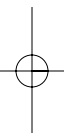
This probably imaginary portrait of Brecknock-born St John Lloyd hangs in the English College at Valladolid, which John Lloyd entered in 1649. After his studies and training as a priest, he was ordained before returning to Wales to serve the Welsh Catholic Community for almost a quarter century, under constant threat of arrest. He was eventually betrayed and arrested at Pen-llin in the Vale of Glamorgan on 20 November 1678, and was imprisoned at Cardiff together with a fellow priest, the Jesuit Philip Evans, who was born at Monmouth in 1645 and trained as a Jesuit at Liège. The latter returned as a missionary to Wales in 1675 and was arrested in 1678.

Both Priests were tried at Cardiff, although there was no accusation of complicity in the Titus Oates plot which had triggered the latest anti-Catholic hysteria, and they were condemned to death and executed at Pwllhalog, Cardiff on 22 July 1679.

Both Martyrs were canonized by Pope Paul VI in 1970, and the Feast Day of the Six Welsh Martyrs is celebrated on 25 October. The inscription reads:

Saint John Lloyd, a native of Brecknockshire, Wales, Alumnus and Priest of this College of Saint Alban, who died for the Catholic faith outside Cardiff on 22 July 1679.

The original photograph was taken by Mr Michael Mead of Pennorth whilst on a visit to Valladolid and Santiago de Compostella, to whom the Society is very grateful, and also to John Bolingbroke, who enhanced the image in order to remove flash reflection.



ADOLYGIADAU/REVIEWS

Diary of a Soul – Pennar Davies, trans. Herbert Hughes, with a foreword by Dr Rowan Williams, Archbishop of Canterbury, 249 pp, Pub. Y Lolfa, Tal-y-Bont, Ceredigion, £9.95

Herbert Hughes' excellent translation from the Welsh of the religious classic *Cudd fy Meiau* (Hide my Faults) by Pennar Davies opens up to the English reader the deep theological and philosophical meditations of one of Wales' leading teachers of religion, preachers, poets and literary critics of the twentieth century. The foreword by Rowan Williams pays sincere and perceptive appreciation of these original secret and private writings and meditations. It is perhaps a curious coincidence that the volume appears at the same time as the '*Welsh Odyssey*' reviewed below, in a year in which we lost Herbert Hughes, who had been an very supportive member of the Brecknock Society, serving on its Council, and who lived within a stone's throw of Gerallt Gymro's Archdeaconry at Llanddew. Dr Pennar Davies was also a one-time Breconian, as Lecturer and Principal of the Memorial College in Camden Road between 1950 and 1959, the period during which he recorded his contemplations, which were originally published anonymously in *T Tyst*, the weekly journal of the Union of Welsh Independents.

A Welsh Odyssey: in the footsteps of Gerald of Wales – Michael Curig Roberts, 253 pp, Pub. Carreg Gwalch, Llanrwst 2011

This excellent volume, well illustrated and sympathetically written, opens up the journey of Llanddew's Gerallt Gymro around Wales in 1188 accompanying Archbishop Baldwin of Canterbury on a recruiting drive for the Third Crusade, and gives a clear account of the various stages of the journey, as well as a wide-ranging interpretation of life and customs of the times. Had Gerallt achieved his life-long ambition of attaining the status of Archbishop of Wales, it would indeed have been an impressive two-archbishop journey through most parts of Wales, starting on the border near New Radnor, and proceeding via Hay, Brecon and Gerallt's Palace in Llanddew, where we can still see part of the ruins in the grounds of the Rectory. We are indeed fortunate in having such an early chronicle of Wales, and such a lively chronicler in Gerallt himself, who lards his account of the journey with many anecdotes, not least a whole series of them regarding the Brecon area, which he of course knew very well. Michael Curig Roberts' book is a valuable and enjoyable read, portraying vividly what must have been a tremendous undertaking in the unsettled years of the twelfth century.

Churches in Wales and their Treasures – Edgar W. Parry, 184 pp, Pub. Carreg Gwalch, Llanrwst 2011, £6.50

This small volume is an English language version of the original *Eglwysi Cymru a'u Tysorau* published in 2003. It is in no way a mere listing of churches, although it does go into detail on some individual sites. It does, however, offer a valuable introduction to both church architecture and symbolism and to the history of the church in Wales, and is both warm and accurate (with one small lapse that places Llananno, Radnorshire, in neighbouring Montgomeryshire). The only detailed description of a Brecknock church is that of Partrisio, probably our most beautiful ancient church, and the only criticism is that the author, who lives in Caernarfon, gravitates more to northern parts. However, this book can be thoroughly recommended, and would be a valuable accompaniment to those who have yet to visit and enjoy the glories of places like Pennant Melangell, and St Winefride's Well at Treffynnon/Holywell and many others in Mid and North Wales.

Real Powys – Mike Parker, 215 pp, Pub. Seren, Bridgend 2011, £9.99

The series of volumes entitled Real Wales, edited by Peter Finch, are mainly concerned with urban centres in this country and also, curiously, Bloomsbury, and the Series Editor notes his initial misgivings on including a volume on such a rural area as Powys, the vast 'Green Desert' at the heart of Wales. However, Mike Parker, author of *The Rough Guide to Wales*, presents an account of the county which swallowed Brecknockshire up in 1974 in a thoroughly researched and sympathetic volume, albeit with a touch of tongue-in-cheek which reflects the 'Rough Guide' style, not surprisingly since Mike Parker was the author of the volume on Wales in that series. To the visitor to this part of the world, Mike Parker offers an amusing and wide-ranging introduction, but there is plenty in this small volume to entertain and indeed to inform even the best-informed dyed in the wool resident.

