

# BRYCHEINIOG

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The Journal of the Brecknock Society

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

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## EDITORIAL

As mentioned in the last issue of *Brycheiniog*, a review of the Journal has taken place during the last year. The review group comprised three council members, namely myself, Elizabeth Siberry and Nigel Clubb. As described in the Chairman's Report, later in this volume, the draft report was considered at a full Council meeting early in 2015 and was approved with a few small additions (a copy can be found on the web-site).

Subsequent to that meeting the review group produced both a job description for the Editor and a list of the qualities and skills that are necessary or desirable for the Editor to have. In addition it has recommended the creation of an Editorial Board, comprising at least four members, two of whom should be members of the Executive Council. These Board members will provide support to the Editor in whatever ways may prove most helpful. A list will also be created of people willing and able to act as referees for articles submitted to the Editor. Work in this area of activity will be completed after this volume of the Journal has gone to press and until such time as details of our search for an editor are circulated more widely, anyone interested in knowing more about the role of Editor should contact me direct. My two year stint as acting editor has made me realise how interesting and rewarding the job can be!

In this issue we have already instituted a few changes in presentation. Thus the author's name appears straight after the title of the paper, rather than at the end as formerly, and we provide a brief biographical description after the article rather than on a separate page at the beginning of the Journal. After a lapse of several years we have been able to reinstate a section dealing with book reviews.

The articles in this issue are, I think, sufficiently varied in style and content to arouse the interest of the reader. In the span of historical time they range from Frank Olding's article on an inauguration poem from (perhaps) 1100 to Graham Jones's paper on Richard Livsey and the 20<sup>th</sup> Century politics of Brecon and Radnor. Our geographical range is considerable also, although I would like to appeal for more contributions from right across Brecknock. In this context it is very good to welcome the article by Stephen Rowson on the Belgian Refugees in Ystradgynlais.

In my editorial of last year I expressed the Society's thanks to Brynach Parri for his five years as Editor. I would like to end this editorial by paying tribute to Edward Parry, Editor of this Journal for eighteen years. In the course of our review, several people, active in the Society for many more years than me, pointed out that the establishment of *Brycheiniog* as a well-respected journal of local culture and history owes a very great deal to him.

Pamela Redwood wrote to me 'as you review the journal for the 21<sup>st</sup> century, I hope you will notice that the success of the 20<sup>th</sup> century has been largely due to the editorship of Edward Parry'. This is a debt of gratitude that I, on behalf of many authors of many articles, am very happy to acknowledge!

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## REPORTS

### CHAIRMAN'S REPORT FOR 2014

In recent years the Chairman's review of the past year has become a regular feature of the Annual General meeting. It seems a natural step to move to a written version within the pages of *Brycheiniog*, and the idea of such a report was one of one of the recommendations in the Review of *Brycheiniog* that was approved by the Council of the BS&MF in January of this year (see below).

#### **Brecknock Museum and Art Gallery**

An account of the latest position with respect to the Museum and Art Gallery is described in the Curator's report. Our Council member, Mervyn Bramley, represents the Society at the regular progress meetings that Powys CC holds to oversee the management of the project. There is now also a wider Stakeholder Group on which many local Societies and organisations are represented and which is also attended by councillors from Powys and from the town of Brecon. I attend this group on behalf of the BS&MF.

#### **Winter meetings**

We started the year with a January talk in the Guildhall Council Chamber by our President Ken Jones on the theme 'Walter Wilkins (1741–1828) of Brecon – Member of the Governing Council of Bengal, joint founder of the Old Brecon Bank and incorruptible M.P. for Radnorshire'. Ken has made a unique contribution to knowledge through his studies of the five men from Breconshire who worked for the East India Company in the decades after 1750: Walter Wilkins being arguably the most influential.

In February we went to Gliffaes Hotel (2 miles west of Crickhowell and commanding spectacular views down to the river Usk) for a talk on the history of fly-fishing in Breconshire and the borders by Roger Smith. As well as for its fishing, Gliffaes is famous for its afternoon tea and this formed an integral part of the event!

#### **The 17<sup>th</sup> Sir John Lloyd Lecture**

This year's lecture was entitled 'The Archaeology and History of Breconshire from the air' and was delivered to a full house in Theatr Brycheiniog by Dr Toby Driver of the Royal Commission on Ancient and Historic Monuments in Wales. He looked at nearly three decades of exploratory reconnaissance and aerial investigation in southern Powys, 'showcasing' some of the major discoveries and demonstrating how much work remains to be done; this point being well illustrated by the discovery, in the dry summer of 2013, of a previously unsuspected Roman fort complex to the east of Brecon. Also he

showed how LIDAR (Airborne Laser Scanning) used by the military can be successfully utilised by archaeologists. Dr Driver ended with some dramatic pictures showing the damage caused and the archaeology revealed by the severe storms of the recent winter. The Sir John Lloyd lectures are often published in *Brycheiniog* but in this case Dr Driver (for the RCAHMW) will be collaborating with the BS&MF and the Clwyd Powys Archaeological Trust to produce a book *Breconshire from above*.

Immediately prior to the lecture, the Museum's education officer Stephanie Dempsey described the participation of Brecknock primary schools in the Victor Jones Local History Competition for Year 6 pupils which is sponsored by the BS&MF. Dr Driver presented the awards. First prize went to Rosie Tustin of Cradoc School for her project 'The Evacuee's Journey to Brecon' which followed the story of her grandfather's evacuation during the Second World War, his adoption by a Welsh family and his career as an auctioneer in Brecon. The school prize of £200 was won by Cradoc School.

### **Thomas Coke Memorial Weekend May 3<sup>rd</sup>–4<sup>th</sup>**

From an international perspective, one of the most famous sons of Brecon is the Reverend Dr Thomas Coke who is best known as 'The Father of the Methodist Missionary movement'. May 3<sup>rd</sup> 2104 saw the bicentenary of his death at sea *en route* to the Indian sub-continent. There are Methodist churches named after him in the United States, Jamaica and Sri Lanka, although, sadly, the Coke Memorial Church in Brecon no longer exists.

The BS&MF has long recognised Thomas Coke's importance and he formed the subject of the Sir John Lloyd lecture in 2009 (see a written version of Dr John Vickers' lecture in *Brycheiniog*).<sup>1</sup> Following an initiative from the Dean of Brecon, the Right Revd Geoffrey Marshall and Jo Hibbard, Heritage officer for the Methodist Church, a planning team for the Memorial Weekend was established under the leadership of the Dean. It comprised, in addition to myself and Peter Jenkins, representatives of the Wales Synod of the Methodist Church.

A particular contribution by the Society was the organisation of a session of talks in Christ College (Thomas Coke's old school) on the Saturday morning. In addition, using my connections as a Methodist, I was able to help with the sourcing of material from various Methodist Collections for the special exhibition in the Museum ('Thomas Coke: from Brecon to the World') that ran from May 3<sup>rd</sup> until May 17<sup>th</sup> (Fig. 1). Conan Daly from the Museum took the lead in arranging the display which was much applauded. In total, there were 805 visitors to the exhibition, 245 of whom came on the first day. Some pictures of the various events can be found at <http://www.methodistheritage.org.uk/thomas-coke-memorial-celebrations-brecon.htm>, together with the text of the various talks and presentations.





Fig. 1 Thomas Coke's mahogany 'Writing Slope' that accompanied him on his many voyages. Here it is in an open position with the two drawers pulled out: one for pens and ink, the other lined with foil, presumably for tea.

Photo copyright 'The Museum of Methodism'

### **The Mint and Joseph Harris**

In June, some 30 members and friends of the Society attended an event at Tredustan Court, near Talgarth, where Jenny and Peter Moody gave us a fascinating account of the remarkable Joseph Harris (blacksmith, astronomer, economist) and, in particular, his work on coins and currency conducted while he was King's Assay Master at the Royal Mint. It was wonderful to hear about him at Tredustan, the house which belonged to his wife's family. Jenny has carried out some important research, which has done a great deal to give Joseph Harris the credit he deserves: see the Wikipedia entry written largely by her.

### **The Brecknock History Forum and Brecknock History Week (Sept 5<sup>th</sup> to 14<sup>th</sup>)**

The Brecknock History Forum is an informal grouping of the local history societies of the historic county of Brecknock. Operating originally under the aegis of the Brecon Library, it has, over the last few years, developed a more autonomous existence. Through an informal arrangement, I chair the meetings and Alison Noble of the Breconshire Local and Family History Society is the very effective Secretary. We are very much indebted to Alan Nicholls of the Hay History Society who has taken on the publishing of Hanes, a quarterly compendium of local history information that was formerly produced by Brecon Library. It is now distributed electronically and members of the Forum are encouraged to distribute it further. This includes printing off hard copies for display in local libraries etc.

The main focus of activity is History Week in September which is linked to the nationwide ‘Open Doors’ (‘Open Doors’ is the Welsh contribution to the European Heritage Open Days Scheme). After paying special attention to the 200<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Monmouthshire and Brecon Canal in 2012, and to our inheritance of historic buildings in 2013, in 2014, we (in common with many others across the country) focussed on the outbreak of the First World War. On the evening of September 5<sup>th</sup>, the BS&MF hosted an evening event ‘Brecknock Remembers: Reflections and Memories of the Great War’ in the Studio of Theatr Brycheiniog. This involved a series of short presentations on the lives of some of the men of Brecknock who fought and died in the Great War. It was masterminded most effectively by Steve Morris of Brecon U3A and involved contributions in respect of a number of communities including Brecon, Builth Wells, Crickhowell and Llangynidr. In addition there was a range of displays prepared by local history societies from across the county illustrating some of the research on the way the people of Brecknock were affected by the War.

### **Remembering Henry Vaughan**

An appeal was launched on 26<sup>th</sup> January to raise funds to restore the grave, in Llansantffraid churchyard, near Talybont on Usk, of the famous metaphysical poet and physician Henry Vaughan (1621 to 1695). The condition of the grave had deteriorated in recent years due to ground movement and the access to its inspirational location overlooking the River Usk was sorely in need of improvement. The appeal was led by the BS&MF in conjunction with Llansantffraid Church and the Vaughan Association. The funds were raised and the work to the grave and the surrounding area was completed



Fig. 2 (a) Restored grave of Henry Vaughan and newly laid flagstones July 2014. The mortar in the gravestone will ‘weather’ with time.



Fig. 2 (b) Wreath-laying ceremony at the graveside September 2014.

during the summer. An account of the progress of the work is shown on the website. See also Fig. 2a.

At the same time, the Parish was relaying much of the church floor with Heritage Lottery Fund support. A celebration event was held at the Church on Sunday September 14<sup>th</sup> to mark the completion of these works. There was an evensong service, with a choir from the Priory Church in Abergavenny, a Henry Vaughan poem, a tribute from Robert Wilcher of the Vaughan Association, and period music. A wreath was laid on the grave.

The decision has been taken to produce a book *Henry Vaughan and the Usk Valley* which will contain background articles, a selection of poems and some complementary illustrations. This project involves coordination between our Society, The Brecknock Arts Trust and The Vaughan Association.

### **Autumn Meetings**

We had two autumn meetings. In October William Gibbs and Elizabeth Siberry gave us an account of artists of the Crickhowell area at a meeting held in the Crickhowell Evangelical Church. Very well illustrated, this talk was greatly enhanced by the research that the two authors have done into a number of the artists: some significant discoveries have been made. And then in November, Joe Lewis of the National Museum gave us a very lively talk in the Brecon Guildhall entitled 'Brecon Gaer – Finds from the Frontier'.

### **Review of *Brycheiniog***

In the autumn, the Council created a small sub-committee to review our Journal *Brycheiniog*, with the aim of ensuring that it meets the needs of today: this sub-committee consisting of me and fellow Council members Elizabeth Siberry and Nigel Clubb. As part of our attempt to gauge opinion, we prepared a questionnaire which went out to both members and non-members and resulted in an invaluable set of responses. I am very grateful to Nigel and to Sophie Houlton for the professional way in which the results were collated and analysed.

Our draft report was considered at a full Council meeting which fell just into the New Year and was approved, with a few small additions. The Society remains committed to producing a printed publication but at the same time is very conscious of the importance of the 2008 agreement with the National Library in Aberystwyth by which, after 5 years, each volume should be accessible via the internet. As of now the volumes for the years 2004–9 have not been digitized and we will be following up this matter with the Library shortly. The results of the questionnaire and the final report are available from me and are posted on the website.

An account of the Roland Mathias Prize is given separately by Glyn Mathias

In summary, 2014 was a busy and productive year. For their support and encouragement, I would like to thank the members of the Society, and, especially, the members of the Executive Council.

JOHN GIBBS

**Note**

<sup>1</sup> Vickers, J., Thomas Coke Revisited. *Brycheiniog* Vol. XLI, 2010, pp. 17–29.

## THE ROLAND MATHIAS PRIZE

It is two years since we last reported in *Brycheiniog* on the Roland Mathias Prize, and a great deal has happened in that time. In successive years, a writer has won both the Roland Mathias Prize for poetry and gone on to win the overall Wales Book of the Year. It is a considerable achievement for a volume of poetry to be rated ahead of works of prose, both fiction and non-fiction, but it has happened two years running.

First, a quick explanation of how we got to where we are. In 2011, the Roland Mathias Prize, which is supported by the Brecknock Society & Museum Friends, moved from being a stand-alone competition to being part of the Wales Book of the Year. It now forms the poetry prize in that competition and each year the winner of the prize gets to showcase their work at an event in Brecon.

So I have two exciting, winning poets to tell you about. The first is Rhian Edwards, a young writer who won the poetry prize and the overall prize in 2013 with her first-ever collection of poems, *Clueless Dogs* (Seren). Described by critics as ‘a confident new voice’, she is also what is known in the trade as ‘a performance poet’. Her performance in the Guildhall Council Chamber in Brecon had to wait until she had given birth to her daughter, but those who braved a stormy night in February 2014 were in for a treat. Rhian gave a feisty delivery of her work, the more impressive for being done entirely from memory.

Within a few months, a poet had again become a double winner. In 2014 it was Owen Sheers for *Pink Mist* (Faber), a verse-drama about three young soldiers serving in the war in Afghanistan. This is a powerful work of great emotional intensity, as an excellent house in the Neuadd at Christ College in November fully appreciated. Owen read from *Pink Mist* and talked about the interviews with young soldiers and their families which form the basis of the book. He managed to convey the reality of war for these young men – and the impact particularly on the women in their families – in a way which at times was intensely moving.

Our thanks go to Literature Wales, under whose auspices the literary competition is conducted and who help to organise the Brecon performances. We look forward with anticipation to the next award.

GLYN MATHIAS

## BRECKNOCK MUSEUM & ART GALLERY REPORT 2014

Brecknock Museum & Art Gallery has been closed since the 31<sup>st</sup> October 2011 and will remain closed until it reopens with restored and expanded facilities in 2016.

During 2014 the Museum's redevelopment team continued to develop the designs for the new Museum, Tourist Information Centre and Town Library. We visited the Design Commission for Wales to discuss the plans further and after a final round of public consultations, the plans were submitted to the Brecon Beacons National Park Authority for Planning permission and Listed Building Consent. We look forward to receiving the outcome of these submissions early in 2015.

The Connecting Communities and Collections Heritage Lottery Funded (HLF) project aims not only to see the restoration of the Grade II\* listed Shire Hall and Assize Court but also the reinterpretation of the Museum collection. The project has allowed us to develop our volunteer programme and during 2014 we increased our volunteer participation to 2000 hours, with volunteers assisting Museum staff in the care of collections, educational activities and the moving of the collection to its temporary store.

In the summer of 2014 we temporarily reopened the ground floor exhibition space for two special exhibitions. In May we celebrated the life of Thomas Coke and the 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary of his death, and in August we opened for the highly successful Brecon Jazz festival, with a special exhibition of Jazz related artworks and artefacts. Over 2000 people visited us during these special openings.

The Museum has added over 1775 items to the collections, during the year, including new archaeological objects, artworks, photographs, and a number of social history and rural life items.

Newly accessioned items of particular interest included three rolls of 9.5mm film, shot by Jack Clark, two framed Cartoons from 1880 and a collection of 1940s photographs of otter hunting on our local rivers.

The Jack Clark films preserve 'moving pictures' of Brecon in the 1920s and capture views of a Brecon school and its teacher and pupils and the celebrations for a parade and carnival. These unique films were immediately transferred to the National Screen and Sound Archive at the National Library, where they will undergo conservation and be preserved for the future. As part of the transfer agreement the films will be digitised and a copies provided for the Museum to display in our new galleries. We are very grateful to the Clark Family for this gift.

The Brecknock Society & Museum Friends provided funds to purchase two cartoons, drawn by William Hall of Brecon, offered for discounted sale to the Museum. The cartoons relate to the last election for the Borough of Brecon

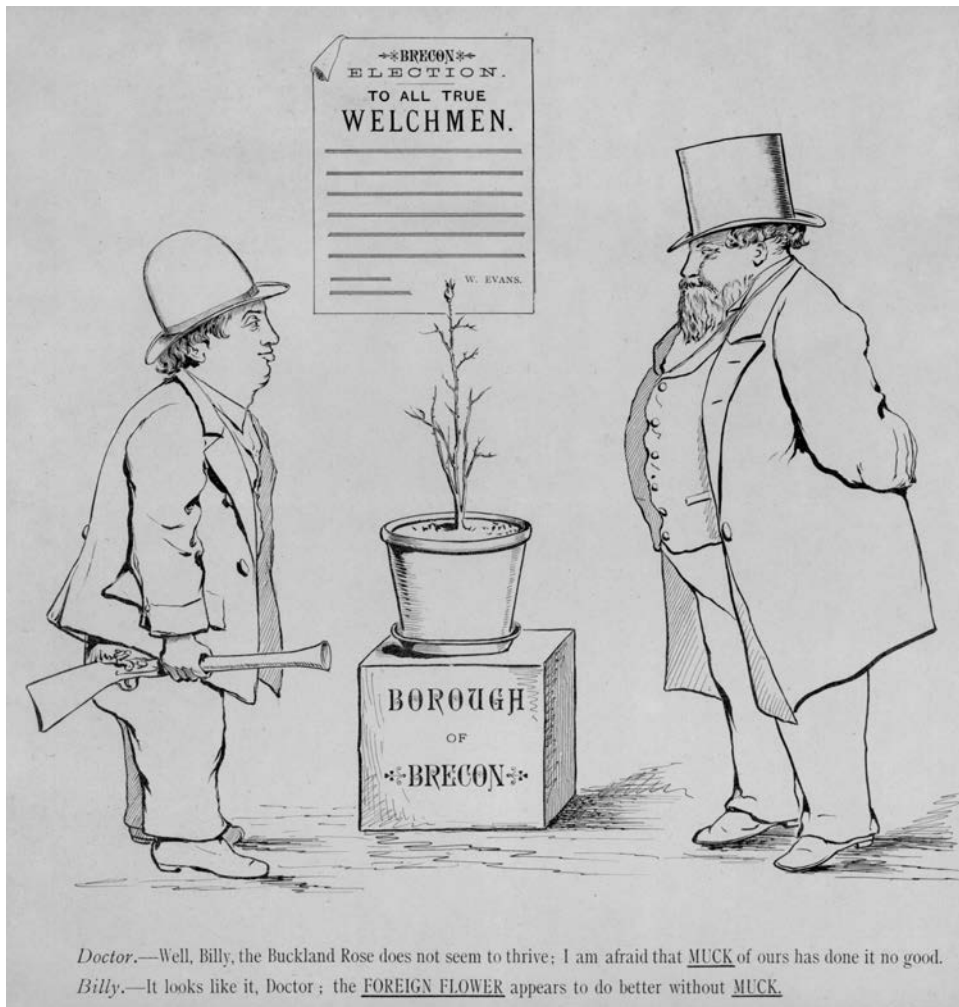


Fig.1 Cartoon by William Hall of Brecon relating to the last election for the Borough of Brecon in 1880 (for more information see text).

in 1880. One of the cartoons features a deceased Buckland Rose, a reference to Gwynne Holford of Buckland, who had been the Tory MP for Brecon from 1870, but was defeated by Cyril Flower, Liberal, 438 to 379 votes.<sup>1</sup>

The Brecknock Society & Museum Friends also funded the purchase of a book from the Garnons-Williams family. The 1887 Queen's birthday book includes images of the royal family and 300 autographs from the Garnons-Williams family collected by Mary Elizabeth, daughter of the Rev. Garnons-Williams of Abercamlais House.

A curious collection to reach the Museum was a group of photographs taken by Victor Jones, around 1945, of a pack of otterhounds hunting along the rivers of Brecknockshire. By the late 1970s otter numbers had so dramatically declined, the otter was placed on the list of protected species in the UK and its hunting stopped. A few otterhound packs hunted mink instead but the dog's popularity soon declined and they are now recognised as an endangered breed, with around 1000 animals surviving in the world. We are grateful to the Brecknock Society President, Ken Jones for the gift of these images.

The Brecknock Art Trust supported the purchase of two watercolours by the ever popular Sam Garratt: 'Mill below Brecon Cathedral' (1919) and a view of 'Llanddew Church, Brecon' (1906).

At the end of 2014 Staff and Volunteers co-ordinated the transfer of the entire museum collection to our new temporary home in Watton Mount. The move included dismantling the Early Christian Monument displays and the Assize court itself. Thousands of objects were packaged and transferred in readiness for digitisation and conservation work, before the final selection process for new displays begins.

Back in the summer of 2014 the Education and Access Officer, Stephanie Dempsey, left us for sunnier climes, and we should like to record our thanks for all her hard work with local schools and for creating our very successful volunteer scheme. We were subsequently pleased to appoint her successor, Martine Woodcock, who joined us from Powys Advocacy for Children and Young People. Martine has worked extensively with schools and also ran a pre-school club for many years. We also appointed the first ever Volunteer Co-ordinator post, supported by the HLF, Becky Parton, who immediately set about expanding our volunteer numbers. I am sure you will join me in welcoming them both to Brecknock Museum.

We continue to be grateful that the collections and facilities at Brecknock Museum & Art Gallery are able to grow and develop through the enduring support of the Brecknock Society and Museum Friends.

NIGEL BLACKAMORE MPhil.  
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**Note**

<sup>1</sup> Information from Ken Jones.



## CRICKHOWELL CRICKET CLUB: A SOCIAL HISTORY OF ITS FIRST HUNDRED YEARS, 1849–1949

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### **Introduction**

A principal motive for writing this article is a conviction that the history of sport matters, that it has long been an important aspect of the social and cultural history of Britain, of Wales and of local communities like Crickhowell. Several decades ago, the celebrated West Indian historian, novelist, journalist and political activist, C. L. R. James, writing in one of the most famous of cricket books, the semi-autobiographical *Beyond a Boundary*, could condemn eminent British historians for writing on late-nineteenth social history without ever once mentioning ‘the man who was the best-known Englishmen of his time’, W. G. Grace.<sup>1</sup> In recent years, academic historians have done much to remedy such shortcomings, to the extent that many university history degree courses now offer modules on the development and influence of sport, undergraduates and postgraduates produce dissertations, and scholarly journals and books are published.

The focus in this article is upon the first hundred years of Crickhowell Cricket Club, that is, from its formation in the year 1849 until 1949, at which point it was firmly established on its then new and present ground. The intention is to regard this as social history – for cricket has always reflected the society around it – and to largely avoid the tedium of matches won and lost, runs scored and wickets taken. The varying fortunes of the club will be outlined but I am far more interested in the development of the game and in the role of key individuals in promoting a recreational activity which appealed to significant numbers of people – both as players and spectators. Through local cricket, I also seek to offer some insight into class consciousness, social relations and gender within the community.

### **The emergence of cricket as an organised sport**

Chaotic, unruly, highly localised sporting activities had existed and developed since medieval times. Primitive forms of football – ‘folk football’ – had been popular across England and Wales – when whole communities competed against each other. There was also ‘bando’ – a crude version of hockey – and pedestrianism, an early form of athletics. In addition, there were the vicious blood sports rooted deep in the past. These included dog and cock fighting, bull and badger baiting (where the animal was tied to a post and set upon by

dogs, one after another in turn). The natural aggression of cocks was supplemented by attaching sharp spurs to their feet, while special pits and rings were built to allow crowds to watch the slaughter. Throwing stones at cocks was a particularly brutal pastime whereby the bird was tethered and then stoned to death, with the thrower of the fatal stone keeping the carcass. The *Abergavenny Chronicle* recorded that such 'sports' were still in fashion in this area in the early-nineteenth century and noted that 'the Sabbath was desecrated by feasting, revelling and gambling'. The newspaper also recounted an episode in Abergavenny in 1824, when 'a mob of men and boys' released a bull from a local farm and then 'chased it with dogs, and beat it until it dropped dead in Frogmore-street'.<sup>2</sup>

By the 1830s, such barbaric blood sports were under strong attack from middle-class animal protectionist campaigners – cockfighting, dogfighting, bear, bull and badger baiting all became illegal in 1835 – while in a period of great social unrest, especially in south-east Wales, local magistrates suppressed the unruly sports of 'folk football' and pedestrianism, with the accompanying gambling, drinking and rowdy spectators.

Such activities were replaced by our modern sports – notably cricket, football, rugby, hockey and athletics – which emerged with established rules and organised structures during the course of the nineteenth century. Indeed, cricket was the first of the modern team games, having an accepted set of rules as early as the 1740s and a governing body, the MCC (the Marylebone Cricket Club), from the 1780s.

The first stage in the development of cricket took place in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, when it was one of a variety of ball games frequently played in churchyards, where there was generally ample open space. Over a period of time, this 'playing at ball' in churchyards and in other open spaces acquired a cricketing format, with runs, catches and run outs. The Methodist Revival and the growth of Nonconformity resulted in the playing of such games in churchyards being increasingly frowned upon, especially on Sundays. At Crickhowell in 1744, for example, four young men were each fined twenty shillings 'for playing ball on the Lord's Day'.<sup>3</sup> It seems that cricket survived because, like other games and recreations, it moved away from churchyards to communal gatherings – fairs, festivals and markets – where organised contests and team events were held, and also, critically, because it was taken up by the gentry, the leaders of local society.

Sport played an important role in filling the gentry's long hours of leisure. Above all, they were attracted to the blood sports of hunting and shooting, during which huge numbers of animals and birds perished. But cricket came to appeal to the gentry too and, in the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries, they were very influential in its evolution. Matches on the lawns

of mansions became a feature in the social calendars of many landed gentlemen.

### **The beginnings of the game in Crickhowell**

The earliest recorded cricket match in Wales was in July 1783 in Carmarthenshire between two teams of local gentlemen and clergy. The first in the Crickhowell area was on 31 July 1819, the *Cambrian* newspaper reporting that ‘on Saturday last, the lawn adjoining the hospitable mansion of Court-y-gollen, the seat of Col. Davies near Crickhowell, was rendered the scene of much festivity, and attracted a numerous assemblage of beauty and fashion to witness a cricket-match played by the following gentlemen’ and then listing various players’ names – from the gentry, clergy and military – men who would have come across the game at public school and university.<sup>4</sup> One of the two captains on this occasion, for example, was Lord William Somerset, the seventh son of the 5<sup>th</sup> Duke of Beaufort and rector of Crickhowell and other parishes. He was a keen cricketer, having learnt the game at Westminster School and Jesus College, Cambridge.<sup>5</sup> Similar recorded games on the lawns of local mansions took place at Cwrt-y-gollen in 1825, and also at Dan-y-parc in 1835 and 1837 – a residence which was to be a source of support to local cricket for many years.<sup>6</sup> Cwrt-y-gollen house was destroyed by fire in 1911; Dan-y-parc was demolished in 1956.

The game of cricket, in an organised form, was thus initially associated with the wealthy landed gentry but in time it became transmitted down the social scale to middle- and working-class men. By the mid-nineteenth century it was taking a strong hold in public schools like Christ College, Brecon, and clubs were being founded – locally, the Abergavenny club in 1834, Brecon in 1848, and Crickhowell in 1849.

Crickhowell Cricket Club played its first match on Thursday 2 August 1849, a home fixture against the Brecon Town and Garrison Club. The supplementation of teams with players from elsewhere was a fairly common occurrence in these early years and the Crickhowell side was a combined one, with the support of players from Tredegar. The result was a very heavy defeat for the hosts, by an innings and 59 runs,<sup>7</sup> but this in no way detracted from the post-match conviviality, an integral part of nineteenth-century local cricket: ‘The players, after the termination of the day’s sport, sat down to an excellent repast provided by mine host Evans. Several capital songs were sung, and the party broke up at a late hour, after spending a pleasant evening’.<sup>8</sup>

The return fixture played a few weeks later was another comfortable Brecon victory, even though Crickhowell borrowed a professional player, Henry Bentley, from Herefordshire.<sup>9</sup>

Out-bowled and out-batted, they could not but yield, –  
 And Old Aberhonddu was lord of the field.

lyrically concluded the local newspaper on a similar match the following year.<sup>10</sup>

These were the only two matches of that first Crickhowell season (1849) and the pattern of just a handful of fixtures each summer remained throughout the 1850s and 60s. These were most often against Brecon and Abergavenny, the latter defeated in Crickhowell's very first victory in the inaugural contest between the two clubs in 1850. From the very start these were serious competitive affairs, as the newspaper reports reveal:

A few weeks ago a match was played on the Abergavenny Cricket ground between the Abergavenny and Crickhowell Clubs, when the Abergavenny lads were beaten by long odds. On that occasion the batting of Parry Lewis, Esq, was the admiration of all who witnessed the play, as was the astonishing dexterity with which Captain Saunders (short stop) caught the ball after a nip. The adroitness with which the Crickhowell players caught their opponents out was truly astonishing.<sup>11</sup>

Abergavenny and Brecon remained Crickhowell's main rivals for the next 120 years. Other fixtures in these early decades were against teams from along the heads of the valleys – Blaina, Nantyglo, Tredegar, or Merthyr – which largely reflected the industrial links with the Baileys of Glanusk Park. Alternatively, games were simply among club members themselves – 'married versus single', or 'military versus civilian', or 'gentlemen versus tradesmen', or even the first half of the alphabet versus the second. On a more competitive level, Breconshire had its own county cricket club in the 1850s and 1860s playing against other county sides – clear testimony to the firm roots established by the game. Crickhowell regularly contributed a number of members to the team.

The first Crickhowell match was played at Ty-rash meadow, beyond today's High School playing fields. Thereafter, during the 1850s, the Duke of Beaufort gave the club use of land at Llangattock Park, which was subsequently levelled and turfed into a proper laid cricket strip. 'The ground', observed the *Hereford Times*, 'is of a most picturesque kind, ensconced by woodlands, to which the feathered minstrels pour forth the warblings of their pretty throats in melodious sounds'.<sup>12</sup> The Duke also provided hospitality, this newspaper account of an 1864 match being typical:

On Saturday, August 20<sup>th</sup>, a match was played, by invitation of His Grace the Duke of Beaufort, between eleven of Brecon and eleven of Crickhowell and neighbourhood, on the cricket ground in Llangattock Park. The weather proved propitious, and during the game, the elevens were hospitably entertained by

His Grace, with a splendid dinner, in his usual generous and liberal style, and refreshments *ad libitum*: in fact, too much cannot be said in praise of this most noble patron of manly English sports.<sup>13</sup>

### **The nature of the game in mid-Victorian Britain**

The game of cricket itself was very different then. One of the earliest photographs of a cricket team in Wales is of the Abergavenny side defeated by Crickhowell at Llangattock Park in June 1864. Here, the players are wearing the traditional white trousers but also an assortment of neckties, belts, tops, neckties and headgear; usually, players just hung up their jackets and got on with the game.<sup>14</sup> The matches themselves generally did not take place on specially prepared pitches but on rough and uneven surfaces, which made the play dangerous; in 1858, a Pontypool player died from a brain haemorrhage after being hit by the ball.<sup>15</sup> Physical injury has always been part and parcel of the game. In 1868, an Abergavenny umpire was fatally concussed after being struck behind the ear, while many years later, in 1933, a blow to one of Crickhowell's opponents, a player from Goytre Hall Cricket Club, resulted in the loss of an eye.<sup>16</sup>

In these early matches the wicket would often be the only mown area and outfield would be lush thick grass and also have other obstructions. Price 'commenced with a magnificent square leg hit for 2, the progress of the ball being unfortunately impeded by a tree', ran one account of a match at Llangattock Park.<sup>17</sup> A report on the Brecon versus Crickhowell match of 1890 recorded that 'A. E. Davies made a magnificent catch in the long field, going head-over-heels through a holly-bush and still retaining the ball'.<sup>18</sup> Boundaries were only scored when the ball was struck out of the ground. Hits had to be fully run, with the possibility of all-run 4s, 5s and 6s; there was even an 8 recorded in one match in Brecon in 1876.<sup>19</sup>

With rough wickets and slow outfielders, totals were frequently low – below fifty was common – while half centuries by individuals were rare. Batting with a solid defence – known as 'stone-walling' – was as much admired as dashing stroke play. In these early days, there were four deliveries in an over; this went up to five from the 1870s with six becoming the norm from the start of the twentieth century. Bowling was chiefly underarm – of various kinds, such as fast, lobs and grubs – although some round-arm bowling took place, with the bowler raising his hand level with his elbow. This could be quite fast and arguments could arise about a bowling action. Overarm bowling began to appear in the early 1860s and this was legalised by the MCC in 1864.

Players were certainly keen. Matches were generally all-day events, with two innings each and play often continuing in heavy rain. So enthusiastic were some of the early Crickhowell cricketers that the regular practice time

was six o'clock in the morning, before work, something that was commonplace elsewhere too – and what were known as 'Peep o' Day' clubs were founded. The early decades of organised cricket also saw a good deal of gambling and betting, involving players and spectators. Odds of 16/1, for example, were offered on Crickhowell winning in the closing stages of one match in Brecon in 1851.<sup>20</sup>

Across the decades there was much camaraderie between local clubs with players socialising after matches, attending each other's annual dinners and sometimes filling in for each other teams. At the same time, there was much rivalry on the field of play, particularly when Crickhowell encountered Abergavenny, 'Public Enemy No. 1 . . . our neighbours across the iron curtain', in the words of one veteran, when 'there was never any reference to that nonsense, "May the best team win"'.<sup>21</sup>

These were light-hearted remarks of course but clearly, from the earliest matches, local cricket carried a great deal of community pride and prestige. In 1857, for example, Crickhowell strongly objected to Abergavenny playing someone who was not '*bona fide* a member of that club', its secretary concluding a lengthy explanation to one local newspaper thus: 'Our Cricket Club is but a small one, and composed entirely of "native talent"; but, though we could obtain very valuable assistance from other parts of the county, we have invariably declined it, esteeming it a greater honour to win matches with our own players, than with the assistance of gentlemen chosen for the occasion from neighbouring clubs'.<sup>22</sup>

A few years later, in 1861, the two clubs again took to the press when, following defeat at the hands of Crickhowell, Abergavenny argued that 'it was a well-known fact that one of the umpires gave "not out" to men who afterwards made long scores, which of course materially altered the state of the game'. Crickhowell's reply included accusations of their opponents again bringing in outsiders to play for them and bluntly telling their neighbours to 'learn to accept defeat with a better grace'. Throughout the decades one can sense the distaste in the *Abergavenny Chronicle* when the town's team lost to Crickhowell. 'As usual, when playing Abergavenny', wrote the newspaper in 1893, 'Crickhowell had gone far and wide to select a team'.<sup>23</sup>

### **Social aspects of the game and the importance of patronage**

Crickhowell's early matches quickly became popular and significant social occasions. The *Silurian* newspaper, reporting the match between Crickhowell and Brecon at Llangattock Park in 1851, observed that: 'The weather being everything the most fastidious could have wished, the ground was visited by most of the principal families of Crickhowell and the adjoining neighbourhood, who, we were glad to observe taking an interest in this truly manly, and now

national game'.<sup>24</sup> The same newspaper, covering a match between the two clubs in Brecon the previous August, reported that:

In the evening a Ball took place in the Castle Hotel, which was attended by upwards of 60 Ladies and Gentlemen . . . The supper tables were most elegantly furnished, and the arrangements . . . gave the utmost satisfaction. Dancing was kept up to the evening strains of the Monmouth Quadrille Band until five o'clock in the morning.<sup>25</sup>

This was rural society in mid-nineteenth century Wales, where thousands of acres in every county were owned by a handful of landed families. It was a deferential society, with enormous respect for rank, and the lower orders destined, it seemed, to be forever subservient. The Beauforts, in the personage of the 8<sup>th</sup> Duke, Henry Charles Fitzroy Somerset (1824–99), were the great aristocratic family in the Crickhowell area. Their principal seat was Badminton House in Gloucestershire but they also had a mansion at Llangattock Park. 'On Monday last', wrote the *Brecon Journal* in 1855, 'the Duke and Duchess of Beaufort and family, with the Ladies Curzon, arrived at Llangattock Park, Crickhowell, for a short sojourn. Their visit was welcomed by the booming of cannon and the many peals of the bells of Llangattock and Crickhowell Churches'.<sup>26</sup>

The other great family of the area was, of course, the Baileys of Glanusk Park. Theirs was a different kind of wealth, more recently acquired through industrial investment. Having amassed a large fortune out of the Nantyglo ironworks, Joseph Bailey (1783–1858) bought landed estates in a number of counties including Glanusk Park in south-east Breconshire in 1826, where he built a splendid mansion. Like the Beauforts, almost every movement of the Baileys seems to have been deemed newsworthy. 'We feel much pleasure in communicating the arrival of Sir Joseph and Lady Bailey, at Glanusk Park, on Friday last, from their tour through Germany and the surrounding provinces and, we are glad to learn, greatly benefited by the change; intelligence which we imagine will be received in the neighbourhood by unalloyed delight'.<sup>27</sup>

Joseph Bailey was knighted in 1852, on which occasion 'more than 200 gentlemen and tradesmen of the town and neighbourhood' presented him with a congratulatory address. Here is a flavour of its content: 'As a landlord, as a patron of the trade of the town, as a friend to the poor in the surrounding parishes, you have endeared your name in the hearts of those connected with you . . .' A procession met him and Lady Bailey on their return to Crickhowell after receiving the knighthood and escorted their carriage into the town through cheering crowds and several triumphal arches.<sup>28</sup>

Both families recognised the importance of local patronage. 'There can be little doubt', writes the historian John Davies, 'that the Baileys were

concerned to show that a “new” family could make a more dynamic contribution to a locality than that made by scions of the old aristocracy’.<sup>29</sup> Like successive Dukes of Beaufort, this local patronage extended to cricket – first Sir Joseph Bailey, then his grandson, Sir Joseph Russell Bailey (created 1<sup>st</sup> Baron Glanusk in 1899) and subsequently the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Barons Glanusk. Their support for local cricket in the early years included matches at Glanusk Park, accompanied by plenty of refreshment and a post-match dinner. Later, the club would establish a regular home on Glanusk land on the outskirts of the town, and periodically there was some financial help from the family, members of whom sometimes played for the team.

### **The club’s early enthusiasts**

Who were the pioneer Crickhowell cricketers? According to the first historian of the club, writing under the pen name ‘Tit Willow’ in the *Abergavenny Chronicle* in 1891, ‘the father founder and originator of the club’ was Dr Evan Parry, who was to play for the first twenty-five years or so.<sup>30</sup> One contemporary recalled him as having ‘vast reserves of enthusiasm, and equally vast theories on the principles of the game, backed by a curious blend of bowling – a sort of cross between overhand and underhand deliveries’.<sup>31</sup> Other enthusiasts included Parry Lewis (the club’s first captain), Edmund Davies, Cox Davies and Edwin Coward.<sup>32</sup>

Another early participant was Captain Robert Thompson Crawshay, son and heir to the great Cyfarthfa ironworks in Merthyr Tydfil. ‘An encourager of the manly and noble game’, he was a frequent member of Crickhowell teams when they played at Llangattock Park and could be relied upon to deposit a plentiful supply of cider in a nearby well (in bottles presumably) every match day so that the players could refresh themselves. A paralytic stroke in 1860 left him completely deaf and his family could only communicate with him by writing on a slate. Famously, and intriguingly, he was to choose the inscription ‘God Forgive Me’ for his own gravestone.<sup>33</sup>

By now, the young Tom Lewis, wicketkeeper and ‘stonewaller’, had emerged as a stalwart; he was to remain a playing member of the club for well over forty years and an administrator thereafter.<sup>34</sup> Other early names include Lord Malden, one of the Duke of Beaufort’s sons, a bowler of ‘fast underhands’; the Crickhowell side sometimes played under the title ‘Lord Malden’s XI’ in the early 1860s. There was also Major Bush, reputedly an excellent batsman even though he only had one arm, and Henry Beavis, ‘chief bowler and secretary of the club for many years’ – on occasions, there were as many as four Beavises in Crickhowell teams.<sup>35</sup> The club’s best players in the 1860s were the future vicar, W. J. Price, the first Crickhowell player to represent the South Wales Cricket Club (alongside W. G. Grace in 1864),<sup>36</sup> and George



Worrall Jones, son of a banker of the same name, who scored 70 and 100 in one match and was thereby Crickhowell's first century maker.

### **The golden years**

By this time Crickhowell Cricket Club was clearly firmly rooted. In 1872 a permanent home was established – on Glanusk land on the outskirts of the town (with Sir Joseph Bailey supplying the materials for the building of a sizeable pavilion). This was the club's home – where the current football field is now situated – until after the Second World War. Previously, as well as at Llangattock Park and at Glanusk, the club had for several years played across the A40, in the field opposite ('the Rheld field'); this subsequently became the rugby, and later, football ground.

From the 1870s the club also entered a golden age of success and prestige. The outstanding figure of this period was Edward Gratrex Davies, whose family home was Herbert Hall, Crickhowell. Born in 1848 and learning the game at Christ College, Brecon, E.G. or 'Teddy' Davies played for Crickhowell for some thirty years from the late 1860s, captaining the club during most of that period; his death in 1899 at the age of 50, while still captain, marked the end of an era.<sup>37</sup>

A solicitor by profession, Edward Gratrex Davies was a prominent figure in the community, representing the town on Breconshire County Council and becoming the first chairman of Crickhowell Parish Council. He was also very active in the local volunteers – the Territorial Army as it subsequently became – as 'Captain' and later 'Major'. As a sportsman, he was a rugby player and rifleman but it was at cricket that he excelled. To the *Abergavenny Chronicle*, in the 1890s, he was 'Crickhowell's greatest cricketer', while an Abergavenny opponent of many years described him 'as one of the finest all-round men in South Wales. A fair very fast bowler, a punishing bat, and magnificent wicket keeper', while also emphasising his 'never-failing spirit of pure sport, which, when he was in command, seemed to pervade the cricket arena'.<sup>38</sup> Much in demand, he played for many different teams, including five counties (but most often, Breconshire), the South Wales Cricket Club, and other local clubs such as Abergavenny, Brecon and Newport – but he was emphatically a Crickhowell man through and through.

In 1881 the members of Crickhowell Cricket Club held a dinner formally to recognise his cricketing prowess. 'England can boast of its W. G. Grace, but we can of our E. G. Davies' – the words of the chairman that evening – is just one example of the fulsome praise heaped on the guest of honour who was also presented with a cricket bat with an inscribed silver plate on the face. The dinner itself, an expensive affair with a succession of toasts to the royal family, to the Church, to the learned professions and to the army, navy and

the volunteers, indicates the cricket club was very much a gentlemen's institution at this time.<sup>39</sup>

E. G. Davies was one of three members of Crickhowell Cricket Club who were selected to play for South Wales against Australia at Swansea in July 1878. '... it speaks well for Crickhowell that a small town numbering 1,400 inhabitants should send so many', remarked the *Abergavenny Chronicle*. 'It has often been remarked that for many years it has been the nursery for some of the best players in the Principality'.<sup>40</sup> Despite the fact that it was eighteen players against eleven, the Australians proved far too strong for the South Walians. And unfortunately for Edward Davies himself, soon after the start of the game, he split the webbing between the thumb and forefinger while keeping wicket and was unable to take any further part in the match.<sup>41</sup>

The other two Crickhowell representatives in that fixture were Thomas Babington Jones and Gerald Wontner. The former, a left-handed batsman, medium-paced bowler and talented fieldsman, was born in Maesteg but brought up locally – his father being rector of Llanbedr for some forty years –



Fig. 1 The earliest known photograph of Crickhowell Cricket Club

and educated at Christ College, Brecon, and Jesus College, Oxford, where he was the first Welshman to win a 'blue' for cricket.<sup>42</sup> He also regularly represented, and often captained, the South Wales Cricket Club during the 1870s and 1880s.<sup>43</sup> Wontner, principally a batsman, played for the Crickhowell club for a shorter period of time. He was born in London, the son of a solicitor, but, on marriage in 1877, resided at Glyn Pedr house in Llanbedr, where he lived as a local squire for the next six years or so; he also served as a lieutenant in the 3rd Breconshire Rifle Volunteer Corps.<sup>44</sup>

Other prominent players included Thomas Jones's brother, F. W. Jones,<sup>45</sup> C. P. Lucas,<sup>46</sup> and Tom Watkins.<sup>47</sup> In addition, the team benefited by gaining players from Abergavenny, where the club appears to have lapsed during the 1870s, due to problems over a home ground. The most notable of these was J. L. Rosher, 'a round arm, medium pace bowler, excellent bat and a panther in the slips'.<sup>48</sup>

Accordingly, it is not surprising that Crickhowell Cricket Club had an excellent playing record in the twenty years or so after 1870, in a fixture list which often included some of the strongest teams in the region. In 1877, for example – a season during which the club won every game except two, which were drawn largely due to unfavourable weather – Cardiff were defeated twice, at home by one run in front of 'a great many visitors' and amidst 'great excitement', and away by the convincing margin of eight wickets.<sup>49</sup> The annual general meeting of 1877 was also a testimony to the thriving state of the club beyond the field of play. Financed through subscriptions and a fund-raising concert and 'athletics sports' day, there was a healthy bank balance, despite the fact that 'almost £20 had been laid out on the permanent tent [for refreshments] and the ground, which is now in splendid order, and as true as any in the principality'.<sup>50</sup>

Some opponents were absolutely humiliated. In 1872, Blaina were all out for 10 (7 'duck eggs' and 1 being the highest individual score, most of the runs therefore being extras).<sup>51</sup> Against Brecon in 1878, Crickhowell scored 238 – a massive score by the standards of the time, with their two star players, Edward Davies and Thomas Babington Jones each scoring 73 – before bowling out their hosts for just 9 runs (including 7 'duck eggs').<sup>52</sup> In 1891, Widnes Cricket Club – on tour in the area – was dismissed for 13.<sup>53</sup> The previous summer Crickhowell had suffered its first home defeat for eleven years. A contemporary commentator could write of 'Captain Davies and his team of well-nigh invincibles'.<sup>54</sup> By now the club was providing the bulk of the Breconshire team and sometimes employing a professional to coach and play; in 1891, for example, the local gentry largely met an appeal for the £50 necessary to cover the costs of hiring Alfred Price from Ruddington, Nottinghamshire.<sup>55</sup>

At the same time, the game remained a social occasion, albeit in a different sort of way to the country house cricket of earlier decades. This report of Crickhowell's match in Hay-on-Wye in July 1891 illustrates 'the social day out':

After a glorious drive of twelve miles amidst delightful scenery as far as Talgarth and a short railway journey along the banks of the lovely Wye . . . the Crickhowell cricketers reached Hay . . . Crickhowell batted first and at lunch had fifty up for one wicket. After the adjournment from the Crown, Crickhowell resumed batting and, when they had scored 130 for nine wickets, T. Lewis declared the innings closed. Hay were twice dismissed, for fifty seven and fifty five, Crickhowell thus winning by eighteen runs with an innings to spare. Price [the club's professional] carried his bat right through the Crickhowell innings for seventy-three . . . A gentlemen from Hay provided tea on the ground for the players, and after another delightful drive Crickhowell was reached. The brake stopped at Dr. Jones' who very kindly provided the travellers with refreshments. An adjournment to Bedfordshire was made about twelve p.m., when all agreed that they had spent a most delightful day.<sup>56</sup>



Fig. 2 Crickhowell Cricket Club, c. 1894

Standing: Arthur Davies; Philip Hill; Benjamin Watkins; unknown; Alfred Davies; unknown; Henry Beavis (groundsman). Sitting: John James Watkins; unknown; Edward Gratrex Davies; George Lewis Hiley; William Lewis.

**Declining fortunes**

Success in sport invariably moves in cycles, of course, and the early 1900s saw the fortunes of the club very much on the wane. In 1902 the *Abergavenny Chronicle* reported that: ‘The Crickhowell Cricket Club, who can boast a splendid reputation in local and South Wales Cricket has fallen upon evil days’.<sup>57</sup> There were serious financial difficulties caused by heavy expenditure on the ground but there was a lack of players too, an increasing number of whom were discovering the attractions of ‘that infernal golf’ – in the words of one chairman – at the new Penmyarth course, on the Glanusk estate. Appeals for subscriptions and social events overcame the debt but subsequent years remained a struggle, despite the best efforts of the club’s diehards, which included the hiring of another professional in 1905 (paid for by donations from prominent members).<sup>58</sup>

The playing strength of the club in the first decade of the twentieth century found the loss of E. G. Davies ‘an irreparable one’. When available, his two young sons, John Edward and Valentine showed high promise but both were away at school and then left the area.<sup>59</sup> Among the batsmen the most notable over a lengthy period were George Hiley and William James.<sup>60</sup> The outstanding local player of the era, however, was principally a bowler, Arthur Evan Davies (1871–1928). He was a gentlemen’s outfitter in the town, a business that remained in the family for many decades. When he died in 1928, aged fifty seven, his obituary in the local newspaper concentrated on his sporting prowess, recalling him as ‘a well-known cricketer in his day . . . a slow bowler of more than average club ability, and critics considered him unequalled in Wales. He played a good deal of representative cricket’.<sup>61</sup>

Seeking to tackle ‘the low ebb of the game’ in Crickhowell, especially the ‘threadbare’ nature of the playing strength, a new initiative was agreed at the 1907 annual general meeting. Promoted by a newcomer to the town, a retired army captain and cricket enthusiast by the name of Captain Henry Cholmondeley, the ‘Crickhowell and Usk Valley Cricket Club’ was launched. The idea was a club extending from Brecon to Abergavenny with its headquarters in Crickhowell. In this way it was hoped to give an impetus to the game in the district and to promote a higher class of cricket. The proposal won the unanimous backing of the meeting, the veteran of fifty-five years connection with the club, Tom Lewis, arguing that it was ‘the only means of saving cricket in Crickhowell’.<sup>62</sup>

After an initial year, it was decided to operate as two separate but closely linked clubs, with Crickhowell continuing ‘as in the old days’ and playing local matches on Saturdays, while the Usk Valley side, sharing the same ground and paying the rent, would have a higher class of fixtures largely in mid-week.<sup>63</sup> This remained the situation for the next seven years until the

outbreak of war. Usk Valley played opponents such as Cardiff, Newport, the Gentlemen of Worcester, the Gentlemen of Hereford, Oxford Harlequins and the MCC and held prestigious cricket weeks. Crickhowell, on the other hand, took on the likes of Gilwern, Talgarth Asylum, Abergavenny Asylum and Abergavenny 2<sup>nd</sup> XI and struggled both financially and in playing strength, with the Usk Valley Club emerging as the main focus of local interest and support.<sup>64</sup>

### The First World War

To the majority of the people of south-east Wales, as elsewhere, the outbreak of the First World War came like a bolt out of the blue, on a sunny Bank Holiday weekend in early August 1914. A month earlier the *Abergavenny Chronicle* had headlined the news 'Austrian Heir Assassinated' but thereafter conveyed no sense of impending European conflict; so too the *Brecon County Times* and the *Brecon and Radnor Express*, though the latter did express its 'gravest fear of a European conflagration' when Austria invaded Serbia at the end of July.<sup>65</sup> The British Government's declaration of war swiftly followed the German invasion of Belgium – 'a pistol held at our own heads', according to Lord Glanusk in a rousing speech at Crickhowell.<sup>66</sup>

Buoyed by the notion that it would be 'all over by Christmas' and a desire to serve their country, local men responded in significant numbers to the call to arms. Sportsmen were at the forefront. One of the first to volunteer was the captain of Crickhowell Cricket Club, Robert Evans, a teacher in the local National (Church) school, the pupils of which turned out in force to loudly cheer him on his way.<sup>67</sup> Within three weeks, no fewer than fifteen playing members of Crickhowell Rugby Club had also joined up.<sup>68</sup> By the following April seven local cricketers were serving in the armed forces.<sup>69</sup> That same month, the annual general meeting of the club unanimously voted to keep going 'for the sake of those members and players belonging to it who were serving in the forces'.<sup>70</sup> But in reality, there was no cricket for four years.

In keeping with communities everywhere, Crickhowell took enormous pride in its contribution to the war effort, the experiences of servicemen being closely monitored and publicised in the local press. Thus, under the headline 'Gallant Sportsmen', the *Abergavenny Chronicle* reported thus in July 1916:

Two ex-captains of the Crickhowell Cricket Club have distinguished themselves in the Great War. Brigadier General A. Solly-Flood, D.S.O., has been made a C.M.G. and mentioned in despatches on several occasions, while Captain J. S. Townley, of the R.A.M.C. (T.F.) has been awarded the Military Cross. Captain Townley displayed great courage in tending the wounded in an engagement with the Turks near Aden many months ago.<sup>71</sup>

None of those who volunteered had any conception of what horrors lay ahead. The war, of course, turned out to be four years of appalling slaughter, most strikingly in the trenches of France and Belgium; grief touched every corner of the land. One of those who fell was Private Valentine Llewellyn Gratrex Davies (son of Edward Gratrex Davies), remembered as ‘a fine all-round athlete, with some of his best cricketing feats being performed for Crickhowell against its great rivals, Abergavenny – just like his celebrated father before him’.<sup>72</sup> He had emigrated to Canada, enlisted there and died on the Western Front in France in April 1915, aged twenty eight. A few months later, Lord Glanusk’s second son, Gerald Sergison Bailey, 2<sup>nd</sup> Lieutenant in the Grenadier Guards was also killed in action in France, aged twenty one. ‘He was a splendid cricketer and had made many good scores for the Usk Valley and Crickhowell Clubs’, noted one obituarist.<sup>73</sup> Amongst those to fall in 1917 were Philip Aubrey Hill<sup>74</sup> and Ronald Hugh Wilson Robertson, both of whom had played for the club in their younger days.<sup>75</sup> Finally, less than six weeks before its conclusion, the conflict claimed the life of Godfrey Beavis, son of former player and secretary, Edward Beavis.<sup>76</sup>

The armistice in November 1918, bringing to an end the four years of carnage, and the signing of formal peace treaties the following summer led to great celebrations throughout the country. In Crickhowell, on a mid-July Saturday in 1919, the town centre was decorated with streamers and bunting, there were water sport competitions in the river, athletic events on the cricket ground, and the local Electric Cinema Company provided a free show in the Clarence Hall. There was food and drink, of course, and a good deal of revelry in the evening. The Kaiser’s effigy was paraded through the town before being burnt outside the Market Hall as the crowd sang popular songs. Fireworks were set off from the castle tump. Similar festivities occurred on the same day in Llangattock and other surrounding villages.<sup>77</sup>

### **The inter-war years**

The desire for a return to normality at the end of the Great War brought the speedy resumption of organised sport, professional and amateur, which had continued very haphazardly during the conflict. First ‘into the field’ locally was the cricket club. A meeting in April 1919, attended by a large number of prominent figures in the town, unanimously agreed to continue the club. Opening the meeting, the chairman, Dr Albert E. Jones, a cricketing stalwart of the pre-war years, argued that: ‘It was unthinkable that a club with such a glorious history should die, and, judging by the large and representative attendance that night, there was a general feeling that once again the grand old summer pastime must live and flourish in Crickhowell’.<sup>78</sup> With Lord Glanusk offering to wipe off the tenancy debt from the estate’s books, there

were sufficient funds to restore the ground to playing condition and within a month the club was back on the field of play.

Other local sporting organisations were revitalised with similar enthusiasm in the immediate post-war years. Crickhowell Association Football Club started up again, playing in the Abergavenny and District League, which also included teams such as Llangattock, Llangynidr, Gilwern and Glangrwyney – clear testimony to the popularity of the game. In 1919, Crickhowell and Llangattock played against each other on Christmas Day afternoon with the return match the following day – Boxing Day – both fixtures in front of large gatherings of partisan supporters.<sup>79</sup> Crickhowell Rugby Club was also revived, there was a lawn tennis club with courts at the far end of the cricket ground (the present football ground), a bowls club on the Brecon Road (across the main road from today's primary school), golf at Penmyarth, alongside the A40 on the Glanusk estate, and a rifle club. In addition, a swimming club was formed in the town in June 1920 – located at the 'Galvey pool' of the River Usk. Over the next few months diving stages were erected and dressing tents for ladies and gentlemen provided. Its first competitive gala on August Bank Holiday 1920 attracted a large crowd of spectators. Swimming, of course, is never without its dangers and a bathing fatality occurred at the pool the following summer.<sup>80</sup> None-the-less, it clearly remained a favourite local swimming location for many years to come, certainly beyond the Second World War.

The cricket club drifted along fairly smoothly in the inter-war years, dealing with practical difficulties as they arose, some seasons more successful than others. The cricket field must have often been a hive of activity in the summer months with plenty of matches and practice, a flourishing tennis club and even some croquet.

The dominant personality on the cricket field during this period was Andrew Provan, who served as club captain for fifteen of these years (1921–36, except 1924), having appeared in Crickhowell teams a decade before the First World War. He was later to recall, as a teenager, being chosen to play for Crickhowell at Builth Wells. Neither he nor the scorer could, however, be accommodated on the horse-drawn brake and so they had to set off early in the morning and make the journey and return on bicycles – a round trip of some 55 miles.<sup>81</sup> Provan earned a reputation as a demanding captain and as a prodigious striker of a cricket ball, even well into middle age; under the headline 'A Fiery Hitter', one south Wales sporting newspaper reported thus in 1930:

Cricket is taken very seriously at Crickhowell, where it is gratifying to find Andrew Provan, who for many years played for the old village club of Gilwern still able to knock up good scores and capture a bag of wickets. Provan, who comes from





Fig. 3 Crickhowell cricket field, 1920



Fig. 4 Crickhowell Cricket Club, August 1928

Standing, left to right: Ray Reynolds, Gerald Loam, Ken Watkins, Percy Wilks, Don Wallace, Bill Townshend; Gordon Edwards, George Thomas, Selwyn Herbert, Jack Waters. Seated, left to right: Viv Lewis, Andrew Provan (captain), Harry Jenkins, Jack Wilks, Gordon Jenkins.

county stock, is one of the finest hitters it is possible to meet. When he once gets set, then spectators and opponents can always look out for fireworks.<sup>82</sup>

Another interesting individual was Robert Gwynne Childe Crawshay Sandeman – ‘Bobby’, as he was widely known – a descendant of the Crawshay family, a branch of which had taken up residence in Dan-y-parc in the early nineteenth century and promoted early cricket in Crickhowell area. Bobby, who lived off the inherited wealth of the family estate, was a man of leisure, enjoying a wide range of interests. His obituary in the *Abergavenny Chronicle* described him as ‘entomologist, astronomer, meteorologist, fisherman, crack shot [and] . . . intrepid mountaineer’.<sup>83</sup> Another enthusiasm, not mentioned in the obituary, was cricket. The annual meeting following his death, however, paid testament to ‘his great qualities of generosity, kindness, friendship and loyalty to the club, like his parents before him’.<sup>84</sup> The strong financial support that his family gave to the club ensured him a regular place in the Crickhowell 1<sup>st</sup> XI in the 1920s and 30s and also the club’s presidency – he succeeded Wilfred Bailey, 3<sup>rd</sup> Lord Glanusk, in this office in 1928 and held it until he died in 1952, at the age of 54. As a cricketer, Bobby was enormously keen but of limited ability, no matter how much he practiced. Late in life, one contemporary vividly remembered being paid by Mrs Sanderman to regularly go to Dan-y-parc to bowl at her son and insisting he bowl as fast as he could – no pity was to be taken.<sup>85</sup> Glyn Gabe, who served as club secretary and opened the bowling for Crickhowell before and after the Second World War, had similar recollections:

I often went to Dan-y-parc to bowl at ‘Bobby’ in the nets at his home and as a left-hander he could competently deal in a workmanlike manner with anything bowled at him and doing everything that his coach Mr Davies had taught him but come every Saturday at the wicket he was, or seemed, completely bewildered. It was acknowledged that our regular opponents Abergavenny and Brecon were aware of the position and invariably he was allowed a couple of runs.<sup>86</sup>

There are plenty of other individuals, too, who played a significant role in the development of the club in the immediate pre- and post-war years. Two stand out, however. One was Arthur Gordon Jenkins, a solicitor with a legal practice in the town and chairman for twenty-one years consecutively, from 1932 until 1952.<sup>87</sup> The other was David Vivian Penrose Lewis.

D. V. P. Lewis – ‘Viv’ to his team mates – was brought up in Talybont-on-Usk and educated at Monmouth School, before entering the flourishing family limestone quarrying business. Joining the club as an eighteen year old in 1923, he served as vice-captain from 1928 to 1936 and captain from 1937 to 1952, whereupon he became its president. Amiable and even-tempered in character, he was nonetheless a serious, competitive sportsman, even when

practising. One young contemporary recalls that when he went in to bat at Thursday evening net sessions he would regularly place a three-penny piece on the top of each stump and whoever bowled him out took the money. On those occasions, he would also discuss the state of the wicket with the groundsman, usually to ensure that it favoured the club's premier bowler of the pre-war years, the spinner, Fred Winter. Thus, if the pitch needed judicious watering before an important game – especially Abergavenny – it got it.<sup>88</sup>

### **The Second World War and its aftermath**

The coming of the Second World War did not see the immediate cessation of local cricket. The Crickhowell club played a dozen games in the 1940 season and a few less the following year. The 1942 annual general meeting, however, took the view that 'the difficult war-time conditions' made it 'impossible to continue the activities of the Club'. Donations from several of the eight persons present enabled the £6 half year's rent owed to Lord Glanusk to be covered, and arrangements were made for machinery and equipment to be stored away and the field given over to grazing.<sup>89</sup> The club played no matches between 1941 and 1947, though the game was kept alive in the area by army sides.<sup>90</sup>

In October 1945, just a few months after the end of hostilities, Crickhowell Cricket Club was active again, with largely the same stalwarts at the helm. At the same time, the club was about to enter a new era with the decision to transfer to a new ground. As D. V. P. Lewis explained to the 1945 annual general meeting:

... it was felt by many members that the present playing field was inconveniently situated and that this was an opportune time to consider moving to a more central position. If the meeting approved the draft lease he felt quite sure that the Bank Field could be developed into one of the most attractive Cricket Grounds in the neighbourhood.<sup>91</sup>

In 1946, a twenty-year lease, with a renewable option, at a rent of £20 per annum, was agreed with the owner, Edward Price, father of John Edward Price, who, on his death in 1997 generously bequeathed the land to the town for recreational use. D. V. P. Lewis himself supplied the heavy plant necessary for the levelling of the field at his own expense. Work began to remove the large tump in the middle in November 1945 but, because of all the laying of turf and seeding required, the new ground was not ready for use until the start of the 1947 season.<sup>92</sup>

Thus, the cricket club left the ground at the bottom of the hill where it had resided for over seventy years. It began its new life with next to nothing.

The existing pavilion was too dilapidated for further use, all the playing equipment had been disposed of, the machinery needed overhaul and the club had virtually no money. A Clarence Hall dance – before the troops stationed in the district had left the camps – and a membership drive brought in some funds, while the club also benefited from a large donation of £150 from the town's Race Club Committee, which organised a series of highly successful horserace meetings at Ty-rash Meadow on August Bank Holiday Mondays from 1945.<sup>93</sup>

The first match played on the new cricket ground was on 17 May 1947, appropriately against Brecon, who had been the club's very first opponents 98 years earlier. The *Brecon and Radnor Express* reporter waxed lyrical of the scene:

Fortunate indeed are the Crickhowell Club to possess so delightful a little ground as their new one opposite the Post Office. It is ideally situated – the tradespeople who show more interest than in some Breconshire towns are able to leave their shops and look over the wall – it has a pleasant environ with the old castle and some large and shady trees in the background; the “square”, expertly laid, looks fast and true, and the outfield short and nicely cut. Such a ground is the reward of generosity, planning, and enthusiasm translated into action, and when circumstances permit of the erection of a pavilion, it will be complete.<sup>94</sup>

At the start of play, the Brecon fieldsmen and the Crickhowell batsmen took the field amid bright sunshine and a sizeable crowd, including the Lord Lieutenant of the County, Lord Glanusk, the scene being recorded on cine-camera by the proud and enthusiastic home captain, D. V. P. Lewis. The inaugural game itself was a low-scoring affair, the visitors winning by the narrowest of margins – one wicket – in ‘an atmosphere of intense excitement’.

During the 1947 season the club made use of an army Nissen hut, bought from the military camp at Dan-y-parc by D. V. P. Lewis, as a temporary pavilion. By the following summer, the club had purchased the pavilion from the defunct bowls club along the Brecon Road and erected it in the top corner of the ground, where it remained for almost half a century. By the standards of the day it was perfectly adequate accommodation – in fact, it was probably quite splendid compared to the one on the old ground – and it did have one touch of grandeur: at the time, Llangattock Park House was being re-built and the ‘stately’ wash-hand basins were incorporated into the changing rooms.<sup>95</sup>

By its centenary year, 1949, the committee and members of Crickhowell Club could justifiably feel proud of themselves. Starting from scratch after the Second World War, the club was now firmly established in its picturesque new ground with an attractive pavilion, ran two teams every Saturday and

had built up a very strong fixture list. Young players of quality – notably Derek Jehu, Trevor Rodwell and Malcolm Gwynne – who were later to be the backbone of a strong 1<sup>st</sup> team – were emerging. There were very diligent behind-the-scenes administrators too – and none more so than M. A. (Mervyn) Thomas (1920–2006), who went on to make an enormous contribution to the Crickhowell community through his work for both cricket and football. In the post-war years the cricket club also had a large membership, playing and non-playing, plenty of spectator support at matches in the centre-of-town ground, including enthusiastic shopkeepers nipping off from their businesses to see how the Saturday afternoon game was going.

In the late 1940s, the club was in some financial debt but this wasn't significant. Above all, the club had strong leadership, forward thinking but with a strong sense of its own history – of outstanding individuals and great games – and of its role in the community. Gordon Jenkins, the chairman, spoke thus to a large gathering of members and guests at the annual dinner in the Bear Hotel in December 1949: 'We at Crickhowell have had at various times, football clubs, tennis clubs, pony clubs, badminton clubs and swimming clubs, all have had checkered lives, but with the cricket club, that has had a more or less continuous life, except for . . . wars, and we are justly proud of that fact'.<sup>96</sup>

Gordon Jenkins was a regular spectator at the ground until the end of his life, despite eventual confinement to a wheelchair. D. V. P. Lewis, on the other hand, who was club president from 1953 until he died in 1976, was but an occasional visitor, his political work now consuming his time. He began a long career in public service in 1938, becoming a district councillor and then county councillor and chairing the Conservative Party in Wales for two years from 1956. In December 1957 Prime Minister Harold Macmillan caused a political sensation by appointing him the first Minister of State for Welsh Affairs, quickly followed by elevation to the House of Lords. The opposition had a field day with the appointment. Most scathingly, *The Economist* commented:

How an obscure Brecon county councillor, visiting London (in his tweed suit) for the University Rugger match, was called to Downing Street to be made a baron and a Minister of State, represents one of the most curious political appointments since Caligula made his horse a consul.<sup>97</sup>

Nevertheless, the newly-created Lord Brecon energetically threw himself into the post, especially in economic and industrial matters, where his expertise lay. He remained Minister of State for seven years, until the Conservatives lost power in 1964, after which he held a variety of business and public positions, including membership of the European Parliament. Troubled by

ill health from the late 1960s, he died of a heart attack at his desk in his Talybont home in October 1976, aged seventy one.<sup>98</sup>

All of the obituaries to Lord Brecon, from *The Times* and the *Western Mail* to the *Abergavenny Chronicle* and the *Brecon and Radnor Express*, made mention of his long association with Crickhowell Cricket Club. As player, captain and administrator, he was prominent in its affairs for well over thirty years and the minutes of meetings regularly pay tribute to his 'unfailing generosity'. Certainly, the delightful ground alongside the castle ruins in the heart of the town is testimony to his vision and his ability to get things done.

### Reflections across the century

From the middle of the nineteenth century to the middle of the twentieth, the cricket club was undoubtedly a major focus for the Crickhowell community and this is indicated by the way in which, having begun on the lawns of the country mansions of Cwrt-y-gollen and Dan-y-parc and in the meadows of Ty-rash and Llangattock Park, its ground moved into the very heart of the town. It was one of Crickhowell's main 'institutions' in an age when the success of the local team on the sports field was seen as important in bringing prestige to a town. Thus there was no question of the cricket club not being revived after either of the two world wars.

In playing terms, fortunes inevitably fluctuated over the century. The club was at its strongest in the 1870s and 1880s, when success followed success. By contrast, there were struggling times too, with problems tending to recur, whether to do with finance, the ground, the machinery, the pavilion, or simply the shortage of players. Over the period, a large number of prominent figures in the town's public life gave the cricket club their support, both as players and administrators; many more in the local community made annual subscriptions. The dominant individuals in the club were invariably professional men – doctors like Evan Parry, Albert Jones and J. S. Townley; lawyers like Edward Gratex Davies and Gordon Jenkins; and businessmen like William George James and D. V. P. Lewis. A number of such men developed their skills and love of the game at public school.

Clergymen were regularly present in Crickhowell cricket teams from the early years and sometimes played prominent administrative roles. The captain of the club in the years immediately following the First World War, for example, was Revd Richard Mervyn Cole-Hamilton, vicar of Llangattock from 1913 until 1948, before becoming Archdeacon of Brecon.<sup>99</sup> Another stalwart of this era was Revd T. C. Wyndham Lewis, rector of Llanbedr.<sup>100</sup> The last was Revd Tom Avery Williams (1907–87), who kept wicket for the club in the late 1940s and 1950s. To my knowledge, no member of the clergy has turned out for Crickhowell in the last fifty years.

Military men, either members of the regular army or volunteer reserves, were also prominent in the club for much of the period. The cricket club annual dinner of 1902 was more a celebration of victory in the Boer War in South Africa than an end-of-season social event.<sup>101</sup> Among the many army officers who turned out for the club over the century, a personal favourite is a certain Captain Wales, who played in the 1920s. He arrived in his car already changed and there he sat, except when he was batting or fielding; his tea was taken to him in the car.<sup>102</sup>

Manual workers did not appear in any significant numbers in the Crickhowell teams of the Victorian and Edwardian eras, despite efforts to attract them. In 1889, for example, the committee announced that ‘as an inducement to the beginners of the working class’ it would admit them as members at 2s 6d each.<sup>103</sup> Nevertheless, the annual subscription fee was undoubtedly prohibitive. Players from a working-class background became much more in evidence after the First World War – men like my own father, who was a postman from the age of fourteen until he was sixty. He played for the club regularly during the inter-war years.

I would like to conclude by considering the rôle of women in this story. During the early cricket matches played in the mansion grounds of Cwrt-y-gollen, Dan-y-parc, Llangattock Park and Glanusk, women were very much part of the scene. ‘The smart array of dresses worn by the assembled ladies and the music of the regimental bands echoing among the hills made the occasion one of the most charming society functions of that time’, wrote one cricket enthusiast of a local match in 1860.<sup>104</sup>

Indeed, the presence of women in these early days was seen as an inspiration to good play. This is the *Brecon Journal*, publicising the opening match of the 1858 season:

Should the day be propitious, we hope there will be a large gathering of spectators, especially of the fair sex, whose presence in the cricket-field always excites the prowess of the rival cricketers, and hits are made, and balls are stopped, in a way marvellous to behold, and which would not be attempted were it not for the magic influence of “woman’s eye” looking on.<sup>105</sup>

With the development of club cricket as we know it, women disappeared into the background, but they were certainly there, providing vital support. Most obviously, they made and served the teas, which became almost a ritual in cricket. They washed the kit of players, and assisted in fund-raising activities such as raffles, dances and whist drives. Some clubs had ladies’ committees to support male cricket – as Crickhowell did in the post-war era, though the chairperson of that committee was a prominent member of the male executive, Mr W. T. (Bill) Lloyd.

Dinners as a gesture of thanks to the ladies were an annual cricket club event at this time. Speaking on such an occasion, in the Bear Hotel in 1953, D.V. P. Lewis addressed the women present thus:

Your reputation as charming hostesses at cricket teas is known far afield. You are an example to men as to the efficient running of an organisation. You not only provided a needful service but in so doing brought substantial profit to the club funds'.<sup>106</sup>

The dedicated female helpers were usually nameless. However, the 1953 annual general meeting held a minute's silence to mark the recent death of 'Mrs John Powell', who, it was observed, had been 'always present [at matches] with her dimpled smile, serving teas, selling tickets and doing innumerable jobs of work for the club'.<sup>107</sup>

The support that women gave to men's cricket can, of course, be seen as a form of male exploitation. However there is little reason to think that that women have regarded it in this light. Indeed, they seem to have enjoyed providing such help, partly because it allowed them to socialise with other women. Certainly, in the century we are focussing upon, both sexes seem to have accepted that the performance of domestic tasks such as the preparation of teas was naturally a sphere of female expertise.<sup>108</sup>

At the same time, it is also clear that cricket was an activity in which many women were genuinely interested and which they enjoyed supporting. Some years ago, I wrote to the late Lady Brecon asking for information on Crickhowell Cricket Club and introducing myself as the son of someone who had played alongside her husband in sides before and after the Second World War. In her reply, she spoke of her late husband's and her own affection for the club, epitomised in 'a very precious' photograph of the 1938 team which had 'a permanent place on [her] dressing-table'. She continued:

Lord Brecon was always a great supporter of the Club . . . I too have many happy memories of the Saturday afternoons spent watching the game and helping with the teas . . . Does your father remember, as I do – the annual "Derby" with Abergavenny? It was always a great victory when "we" beat them! I expect he does remember.

I am always sad that neither my husband nor I kept a diary of the matches. They were happy days when the team played at home as long ago as the days before "we" moved up to the Castle field . . .

One day, very recently, there was a game on – a Saturday afternoon, & I stopped & watched for a little while – a lovely little while, which took me back to those happy days of over half-a-century ago.

Remember me to your father.

Yours ever

Lady Brecon<sup>109</sup>



## Notes

- <sup>1</sup> C. L. R. James, *Beyond a Boundary* (London, 1963), p. 208.
- <sup>2</sup> *Abergavenny Chronicle (AC)*, 2 January 1953.
- <sup>3</sup> Badminton Manorial Records for Breconshire, NLW, MS 224, cited in Andrew Hignell, *A 'Favourit' Game?: Cricket in south Wales before 1914* (Cardiff, 1992), p. 9.
- <sup>4</sup> *Cambrian*, 7 August 1819.
- <sup>5</sup> Hignell, *A 'Favourit' Game*, p. 16.
- <sup>6</sup> www.cricketarhive.com misc. 5906; *ibid.*, misc. 5928, 5937, 5938; *Monmouthshire Merlin (MM)*, 2 September 1837.
- <sup>7</sup> 'The Crickhowell men were nearly all young players, and their opponents an efficient eleven. The bowling and fielding of the Breconians were admirable', explained one report. *Hereford Times (HT)*, 11 August 1849. See also, *Hereford Journal*, 8 August 1849; *Silurian*, 11 August 1849; Brecknock Museum, Lloyd, A1/15, *Matches of the Breconshire Cricket Club from 1848 to 1860*, 2 August 1849. I am grateful to Bob Harragan for information on early Crickhowell matches.
- <sup>8</sup> *HT*, 11 August 1849.
- <sup>9</sup> *Silurian*, 8 September 1849; Lloyd, A1/15, 31 August 1849.
- <sup>10</sup> *Silurian*, 6 July 1850. See also, *HT*, 6 July 1850.
- <sup>11</sup> For the return fixture, played on 'a most beautiful day' at Llangattock Park a few weeks later, 'the elite of the neighbourhood were present to witness, as was generally thought, the second defeat of the Abergavenny club'. In the event, it was the visitors who won comfortably. *MM*, 13 July 1850. See also, *HT*, 15, 22 June 1850.
- <sup>12</sup> *HT*, 4 June 1864.
- <sup>13</sup> *Brecon Reporter*, 3 September 1864. See also, *Hereford Journal*, 6 September 1862; *HT*, 5 September 1863.
- <sup>14</sup> The photograph can be viewed on the National Library of Wales website, <http://digidol.llgc.org.uk> [NLW PG4189/40].
- <sup>15</sup> Hignell, *A 'Favourit' Game*, p. 20. See also *MM*, 12 June 1858.
- <sup>16</sup> Badham, *Fifty Years of Cricket in Abergavenny*, p. 34; *AC*, 20 April 1934.
- <sup>17</sup> *HT*, 4 June 1864. On another occasion it was reported of the same player: 'The fast twisting round-hand bowling of W. Price had great effect in lowering the stumps, the ground favouring his style very much'. *MM*, 31 August 1861.
- <sup>18</sup> *AC*, 5 September 1890.
- <sup>19</sup> Lloyd A1/17, *Breconshire Cricket Club*, 19 July 1876.
- <sup>20</sup> *Silurian*, 26 July 1851.
- <sup>21</sup> *AC*, 26 November 1948, 27 March 1943.
- <sup>22</sup> *HT*, 15 August 1857.
- <sup>23</sup> Badham, *Fifty Years of Cricket in Abergavenny*, pp. 22–3; *AC*, 27 March 1953.
- <sup>24</sup> *Silurian*, 7 June 1851.
- <sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, 10 August 1850. The match between Crickhowell and Abergavenny earlier in the season had been similarly followed by an evening ball, at the Bear Hotel, Crickhowell, tickets priced at five shillings for ladies and seven and sixpence for gentlemen. *Ibid.*, 6 July 1850.
- <sup>26</sup> *Brecon Journal (BJ)*, 25 August 1855. See also *MM*, 31 August 1849: 'The Duke and Duchess of Beaufort, and family, arrived at Llangattock Park, near Crickhowell, on Tuesday last, where they intend staying for a short time. The bells of Llangattock and Crickhowell rang merrily throughout the day.'
- <sup>27</sup> *BJ* 22 September 1855. Similarly, in 1863, the announcement that Lady Bailey had given birth to a son was received in the town 'with general exultation; the bells of the parish church rang forth a merry peal, and bon-fires and foot-balls were to be seen in all directions'. *Illustrated Usk Observer*, 21 November 1863.
- <sup>28</sup> *Silurian*, 10 July 1852.

<sup>29</sup> John Davies, 'The Landed Families of Breconshire', *Brycheiniog*, XXXVI (2004), p. 72. In 1861, the coming of age and marriage of Sir Joseph Russell Bailey was met with 'great festivities' in the locality, when 'the carcasses of eleven beasts were divided among the poor, each joint being accompanied by a gallon of good ale'. *Illustrated Usk Observer*, 13 April 1861.

<sup>30</sup> 'Tit Willow', 'Cricket in the Old Days: History of the Crickhowell Club', *AC*, 31 July 1891, republished in *Brecon County Times (BCT)*, 17 November 1932. Evan Parry, doctor and surgeon, was born in Cwmdru in 1814 and spent his career working in the Crickhowell area. In his seventies, he retired to Llanarth, near Llandyssul, Cardiganshire, where he died in 1898. He was still being toasted as 'the father of the club' many years after its foundation. *AC*, 13 October 1877.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.* 18 April 1919.

<sup>32</sup> Parry Lewis (1829–63) – scorer of the club's first half-century, against Brecon in August 1850, and selected to play against an All England XI at Hereford that same year – was a local landowner; Edmund Davies (1826–52) and Edward John Cox Davies (1824–78) were solicitors; Edwin Coward (1825–54) was an accountant, born in Chelsea.

<sup>33</sup> For Crawshay's promotion of the game, see Hignell, *A 'Favourit' Game*, p. 94.

<sup>34</sup> Thomas Lewis (1841–1930) was a stable lad at Glanus, then an innkeeper and later an auctioneer and (for 53 years) a Collector of Rates and Taxes for the Inland Revenue Board. Obituaries in *Brecon and Radnor Express (B&R)*, 18 December 1930; *AC*, 19 December 1930; and *HT*, 27 December 1930. Born of humble origins, he prospered sufficiently to become a benefactor to the poor by the end of his life. By all accounts, he was a fine wicketkeeper and a highly competitive one – one old friend recalled that 'his slashing tactics of "How is that?" has victimised and sent many an excellent bat with an early retreat back to the pavilion'. *AC*, 20 January 1928.

<sup>35</sup> 'Tit Willow', 'Cricket in the Old Days'. Born in Devon, Henry Beavis (1838–96) became a solicitor's clerk in Crickhowell, before opening his own business as a bookseller and stationer in the town.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.* The son of a Crickhowell draper and clerk to the Board of Guardians, William James Price (1843–1928) was educated at Jesus College, Oxford, and went on to serve as vicar in several Midland parishes, his dedicated service to the Birmingham diocese earning the title Honorary Canon; he retired to Exmouth, where he died. Many years later he supplied the Crickhowell club with his memories of its formative years. *AC*, 18 November 1919. Obituary in *ibid.*, 17 February 1928. For further information on the cricket career of W. J. Price, see [www.cricketchive.com](http://www.cricketchive.com)

<sup>37</sup> Obituaries in *B&R*, 8 June 1899; *AC*, 9 June 1899; *Western Mail*, 10 June 1899.

<sup>38</sup> Badham, *Fifty Years of Cricket in Abergavenny*, p. 32.

<sup>39</sup> *AC*, 30 September 1881. See also, the dinner on New Year's Eve 1884 to commemorate his recent marriage when the cricket club presented him with a silver salver. 'You, sir', said its secretary, the solicitor R. H. A. Davies, 'have since, I may say a boy at the formation of our club, been our mainstay and helped to pull us through many a match we should not have won without you; in fact, I don't think we should have existed without you.' *Ibid.*, 9 January 1885.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, 13 July 1878.

<sup>41</sup> Hignell, *A 'Favourit' Game*, pp. 107–9. See also R. J. Harragan, 'The Australians come to Swansea', *Journal of the Cricket Society*, 14 (1989).

<sup>42</sup> Andrew Hignell, *Cricket in Wales: An Illustrated History* (Cardiff, 2008), p. 63; *Idem.*, *A 'Favourit' Game*, p. 104. Jones practised as a solicitor from 1878 to 1887, practising in Abergavenny, Barrow-in-Furness and Cardiff. He died in 1890, aged 39, 'of general paralysis in an asylum, (having) led a strangely elusive life and it appears that the good times may have been his undoing'. D. T. and J. B. Smith, *First-Class Cricketers from Christ College, Brecon* (Bath, 1979), p. 16. Obituary in *Brecknock Beacon*, 15 August 1890.

<sup>43</sup> This was the first team to represent the region, playing fixtures against English and Welsh opposition. See D. T. and J. B. Smith, *The South Wales Cricket Club, 1859–1886* (Corsham, 1986); scorebook in Brecknock Museum, Lloyd A1/16, *South Wales Cricket Club*. Jones's ability is shown in

some of his performances at this level – 15 wickets against Surrey Club and Ground at the Oval in 1875 and 97 runs against the MCC at Lord's in 1877, for example.

<sup>44</sup> *AC*, 10 May 1879; *London Gazette*, 13 January 1880. Wontner also died prematurely, in 1885, at the age of 34. For further information on the cricket careers of Edward Gratrex Davies, Thomas Babington Jones and Gerald Wontner, see [www.cricketarhive.com](http://www.cricketarhive.com)

<sup>45</sup> Born in Swansea and educated at Cowbridge Grammar School and Lincoln College, Oxford, Francis Willoughby Jones (1853–1935) followed in the footsteps of his father and entered the Church.

<sup>46</sup> Educated at Winchester College and then Balliol College, Oxford, Charles Prestwood Lucas (1853–1931) served the club as player, secretary and chairman before embarking on a distinguished career as a civil servant and then historian, gaining a knighthood in 1907. Obituary in *AC*, 15 May 1931. He was the son of Dr Henry John Lucas (1804–73), who had been held in such regard in Crickhowell that the distinctive grey granite fountain in the town centre was erected in his memory by public subscription. *AC*, 12 June 1875.

<sup>47</sup> The son of a Llangatock coal merchant and farmer, Thomas Watkins (1862–1936) was reputedly one of the fastest bowlers in south Wales. His career as a civil engineer took him to the USA in 1889, where he remained for some thirty years. On his return, after the First World War, he was promptly voted chairman of the club. *AC*, 21 February 1920. Obituary in *ibid.*, 24 April 1936. His three younger brothers – John James and Ben (both of whom continued the family coal merchant business) and William (a doctor) – were also prominent members of the club ‘in its palmiest days’. *AC*, 24 July 1914 (obituary for J. J. Watkins).

<sup>48</sup> Badham, *Fifty Years of Cricket in Abergavenny*, p. 33. See also, John Morris, *Looking Back: A History of Abergavenny Cricket Club, 1834–1934* (Abergavenny, 1984); Paul Sussex and Ryland Wallace (eds), *Abergavenny Cricket Club: A Celebration of 175 Years, 1834–2009* (Abergavenny, 2009).

<sup>49</sup> *AC*, 30 June, 21 July 1877; *Western Mail*, 16 July 1877; ‘Tit Willow’, ‘Cricket in the Old Days’. Both were two-day matches, involving two innings per side, with a joint dinner on the evening of the first day.

<sup>50</sup> *AC*, 13 October 1877.

<sup>51</sup> ‘Tit Willow’, ‘Cricket in the Old Days’.

<sup>52</sup> Lloyd A1/17, 2 August 1878; *AC*, 10 August 1878; *BCT*, 10 August 1878.

<sup>53</sup> *AC*, 24 July 1891.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, 23 May 1890.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, 13 March 1891, 18 April 1919. The intermediary was apparently W. G. Grace, with whom E. G. Davies had played alongside for the South Wales Cricket Club, in 1864, both as sixteen-year olds. For information on the cricket career of Alfred Price (1862–1942), see [www.cricketarhive.com](http://www.cricketarhive.com)

<sup>56</sup> *AC*, 24 July 1891.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, 14 February 1902. See also, 21 March, 26 September 1902.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, 14 April 1905. The professional engaged was another Alfred Price, this time from High Leigh, Cheshire. For the 1906 season he was replaced by Albert Greaves. *Ibid.*, 18 May 1906. A vital figure in the survival of the club in these years was Daniel Gibson Harris, a solicitor's clerk and native of Llanhilleth, who was secretary from 1901 until he left the town in 1906. See the testimonies of members on various occasions. *Ibid.*, 21 March, 26 September 1902, 9 February 1906.

<sup>59</sup> Born in 1885 Edward John Gratrex Davies attended Cowbridge School, before going on to become a solicitor, practising in Weston-Super-Mare, where he died at the age of 36. His younger brother, Valentine, was educated at Felsted, Essex, before becoming a rancher in Canada; he was killed in action during the First World War.

<sup>60</sup> George Lewis Hiley (1866–1934) was a solicitor who lived in Gilwern, William George James (1872–1938) was a paper manufacturer from Llangenny and particularly active in public life. They captained the club in 1901 and 1904 respectively. Obituaries in *AC*, 5 January 1934 and 4 March 1938.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, 31 August 1928. See also *ibid.*, 20 March 1925, 29 June 1928.

<sup>62</sup> *BCT*, 8 February 1907. A professional, M. J. L. Thomas, former coach at Harrow Cricket Club and elsewhere, was hired for the season. *AC*, 5 April 1907.

<sup>63</sup> *AC*, 17 January 1908. Indicative of its strength was that by 1913 the former Kent captain, C. H. B. Marsham, now living in Glangrwyney, was captain and secretary of the Usk Valley Club. *Ibid.*, 17 April 1911, 7 February 1913. The club continued to flourish until its disbandment early in the First World War, though it was revived as a touring team in the 1950s. *Ibid.*, 30 April 1915.

<sup>64</sup> Symptomatically, it failed to raise a team against Brynmawr in August 1913. The very survival of the club was debated in these years and was much dependent on veterans like the Liverpool-born auctioneer Arthur J. Thomas (1865–1941), a playing member for over thirty years and by the immediate pre-war years serving as both club captain and chairman. *Ibid.*, 17 March 1911, 21 February 1913.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, 3 July 1914; *B&R*, 30 July 1914.

<sup>66</sup> *AC*, 7 August 1914.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*, 11 September 1914. Born and brought up in Anglesey, he was aged thirty two at the time of enlistment. Becoming a sergeant with the Monmouthshire Regiment, he earned the Meritorious Service Medal 'for gallantry in the field'. *Ibid.*, 4 April 1919.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*, 4 September 1914.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*, 30 April 1915.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*, 30 April 1915. A letter from Colonel Arthur Solly Flood of Porthmawr, Crickhowell, a former captain of the club (1905–6) and now commanding officer of the 4<sup>th</sup> Dragoon (Irish) Guards, expressed the same sentiment. *Ibid.*, 21 May 1915. He had a distinguished military career, reaching the rank of major-general. Obituary in *ibid.*, 22 November 1940, which testified to his cricketing prowess.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*, 7 July 1916. Dr Joseph Swinburn Townley (1878–1956) was a medical practitioner in Crickhowell for over thirty years. Keenly interested in cricket, he captained the club in 1909. He joined the Royal Army Medical Corps on the outbreak of war and accompanied the Crickhowell Volunteers (1<sup>st</sup> Battalion Brecknock South Wales Borderers) to Aden and other places. It was while serving 'out east' in May 1915 that news reached him that his wife had died, leaving three young children. His application for leave of absence to visit his home was refused. *Ibid.*, 7 May, 8, 29 October 1915. Obituaries in *ibid.*, 22 June 1956 and *B&R*, 21 June 1956.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*, 14 May, 2, 30 July, 1915.

<sup>73</sup> *B&R*, 19 August 1915. See also, *AC*, 13 August 1915. His younger brother, Bernard Michael Bailey, a midshipman in the Royal Navy, died at the Battle of Jutland in May 1916, aged 17. *B&R*, 8 June 1916; *AC*, 9 June 1916.

<sup>74</sup> The son of Dr Philip Edward Hill of Latham House, himself a cricketer, he was educated at Uppingham School, Rutland, before entering the teaching profession and eventually becoming a headmaster in Bromley, Kent. Rising to the rank of captain in the Breconshire Battalion of the South Wales Borderers, he was killed in action in northern France in April 1917, aged 43. A marble tablet in his memory is affixed inside St Edmund's Church, Crickhowell, the inscription ending thus: 'He died the noblest death a man can die, fighting for God, and Right, and Liberty, and such a death is Immortality'. *AC*, 4, 25 May 1917, *BCT*, 19 December 1918.

<sup>75</sup> *AC*, 14 September 1917. Born in Southend, he had worked as a land agent's clerk in Crickhowell for a number of years and served as a prominent member of the local Volunteers. Emigrating in 1905, he became a lance corporal in the Canadian Infantry and was killed in action in France in August 1917, shortly before his thirty-eighth birthday and a few weeks after visiting old friends in Crickhowell.

<sup>76</sup> One of ten children, Godfrey Beavis had emigrated to Canada in 1907, at the age of eighteen, and died in northern France in late September 1918. Obituary to Edward Beavis in *AC*, 15 February 1901.

<sup>77</sup> *AC*, 25 July 1919; *BCT*, 24 July 1919.

<sup>78</sup> *AC*, 11 April 1919. The son of a vicar, Dr Albert Edward Jones (1856–1932), was born in Merthyr Tydfil and educated at Llandovery College. After qualifying as a medical practitioner in London, he joined his uncle, Dr Evan Parry, in Crickhowell; the former was prominent in the foundation of the club, the latter was central to its continuance in the early-twentieth century. Obituary in *ibid.*, 20 May 1932.

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*, 2 January 1920.

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*, 11 June, 23 July, 6 August 1920, 10 June 1921.

<sup>81</sup> Glyn Gabe to Revd Cyril James, 30 January 1979. Various material relating to local cricket, gathered by Revd James, rector of Crickhowell parish from 1957 to 1977, is now in the author's possession. Born in Tredegar in 1885, Andrew Mason Provan was the son of the chief accountant of the Tredegar Iron and Coal Company; he himself was employed in the offices of the same company.

<sup>82</sup> *South Wales Sporting* \_\_\_\_\_ (last word missing), 22 May 1930 (newspaper cutting in Revd James collection). Seven years later, one national newspaper carried the headline 'Fine Stand by 70-Year-Old' on its sports pages, reporting that Provan had defiantly hit out with a series of boundaries as last man in Crickhowell's recent defeat against Usk. In truth, he was a mere 51 year old. *Sunday Chronicle*, 8 August 1937 (Revd James collection).

<sup>83</sup> *AC*, 2 May 1952. See also *ibid.*, 8 February 1952.

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*, 27 March 1953. For one example of the family's generosity, see *HT*, 1 March 1930. His father, Colonel Robert Preston Sandeman (1852–1932), had also been a keen cricketer.

<sup>85</sup> Oral testimony of former player, John Dudley (Jack) Wallace (1910–97).

<sup>86</sup> Glyn Gabe to Revd Cyril James, 30 January 1979.

<sup>87</sup> The son of a schools organiser for Denbighshire Education Authority, Arthur Gordon Jenkins (1905–79) was born in Wrexham and brought up in Ruthin. He died in tragic circumstances in a house fire at his Crickhowell home. Obituary in *AC*, 12 April 1979 ('Town Shocked by Blaze Death').

<sup>88</sup> Oral testimony of former scorer, player and secretary, John King (1926–2014); taped interview, 15 February 2008.

<sup>89</sup> Crickhowell Cricket Club (CCC) minute book, annual general meetings, 5 April 1940, 18 April 1941, 15 May 1942; *AC*, 19 April 1940, 25 April 1941.

<sup>90</sup> *B&R*, 13 September 1945.

<sup>91</sup> CCC minutes, annual general meeting, 18 October 1945.

<sup>92</sup> *Ibid.*, special meeting, 1 October 1945; committee meeting, 15 November 1945; *B&R*, 1 November 1945; *AC*, 30 November 1945. The club did not play any games at all during the 1946 season.

<sup>93</sup> CCC minutes, committee meetings, 15 November 1945, 20 March 1947; *B&R*, 15 August 1946, 14 August 1947.

<sup>94</sup> *B&R*, 22 May 1947.

<sup>95</sup> CCC minutes, committee meetings, 25 June 1946, 20 March 1947; *B&R*, 1 April 1948; Glyn Gabe to Revd Cyril James, 30 January 1979.

<sup>96</sup> *B&R*, 8 December 1949.

<sup>97</sup> *The Economist*, 21 December 1957. He was created a hereditary peer as Baron Brecon of Llanfeugan, Brecknock, in January 1958.

<sup>98</sup> *The Times*, 11 October 1976; *Western Mail*, 11 October 1976; *AC*, 14 October 1976; *B&R*, 14 October 1976.

<sup>99</sup> Born in Northamptonshire, Richard Mervyn Cole-Hamilton (1877–1959) captained the club in 1919 and 1920. Obituaries in *The Times*, 7 September 1959; *B&R*, 10 September 1959; *AC*, 18 September 1959. His son, Lieutenant David Edmund Cole-Hamilton, was killed in action during the Second World War, in June 1942, aged twenty eight.

<sup>100</sup> Born in Troedryhiw, Merthyr Tydfil, Thomas Cyril Wynham Lewis (1879–1953) regularly opened the batting with his fellow clergyman, Richard Cole-Hamilton, in the years after the First World War.

<sup>101</sup> *AC*, 26 September 1902.

<sup>102</sup> Oral testimony of former player, my father, Don Wallace (1907–89). The son of a mining engineer, Owen Murton Wales was born in 1895 in Pontypridd and educated at Repton School. He served as an army officer in the First World War and later in India, rising to the rank of colonel. He was vice-captain of the club in 1927.

<sup>103</sup> *AC*, 24 May 1889. In return for this fee, players would be eligible for selection for any of the club's sixteen fixtures and attend practice, which was held on Tuesdays, Wednesdays, Fridays and Saturdays under the guidance of Watkins, the club's professional.

<sup>104</sup> *BJ*, 5 May 1860.

<sup>105</sup> *Ibid.*, 12 June 1858.

<sup>106</sup> *AC*, 8 May 1953.

<sup>107</sup> *Ibid.*, 27 March 1953.

<sup>108</sup> Jack Williams, *Cricket and England: A Cultural and Social History of the Inter-War Years* (London, 1999), p. 186.

<sup>109</sup> Lady Brecon to author, 25 July 1985.

**Ryland Wallace** was born and brought up in Crickhowell and educated at Brecon Boys' Grammar School and Aberystwyth University, where he obtained a degree and doctorate in history. He has written two books and various articles on Welsh history. Now retired, he taught for most of his career in Coleg Gwent, Pontypool.

## RICHARD LIVSEY, LORD LIVSEY OF TALGARTH (1935–2010), AND THE POLITICS OF BRECON AND RADNOR

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### **Introduction**

In the 2003 Sir John Lloyd lecture to this society entitled ‘Brecknock at the Crossroads’, Professor Aled Gruffudd Jones commented on the surprise election of Richard Livsey, the Liberal candidate, at the 1985 Brecon and Radnor by-election and said that it showed how Brecon stands in the middle of a political crossroads and has done so for a very long time.<sup>1</sup> He attributed this instability to the fact that inhabitants of the area moved between different social, political and cultural worlds, travelling from south to mid-Wales, from east to west, from the agricultural to the industrial, the rural to the urban, and from Welsh areas to predominantly English-speaking ones. An appreciation of these underlying processes can provide some understanding of the way in which such a major political upset could occur.

In assessing Richard Livsey’s engagement with his constituency, I have drawn on a very large collection of his political papers, some deriving from the family home and others held at his office at the House of Lords, which was recently presented by his widow to the custody of the Welsh Political Archive at the National Library of Wales. Through them I seek to illustrate the way in which, despite the power of party machines, an individual politician can make a real difference and change the way in which a constituency is perceived.

### **Richard Livsey’s background and developing interest in the Brecon and Radnor Constituency**

Richard Arthur Lloyd Livsey was born at Talgarth, Breconshire, on 2 May 1935, the son of Arthur Norman Livsey, a master mariner of Brecon who also worked as a canal lock keeper, and Lilian Maisie (née James), a schoolteacher. His father died in Iraq in 1938 when Richard Livsey was just three years old, and consequently it was his widowed mother who had a great influence on his early development. He was educated at Talgarth County Primary School, Bedales School in Hampshire (a progressive independent school), Seale-Hayne Agricultural College, where he studied for a National Diploma in Agriculture, and later at Reading University, where he gained the degree of M.Sc. in agricultural management.

The young Richard Livsey began to take a keen interest in political life with the general election of July 1945, which he followed avidly in the Brecon and Radnor constituency: 'Breconshire was very political but was always split three ways between the three political parties'.<sup>2</sup> Set in the context of the twentieth century as a whole, this is a fair comment, but it should be noted that, having been taken by the Labour Party in 1939, the Brecon and Radnor division was held by that party for 40 years. Tudor Watkins, well-regarded as a constituency MP, was the member from 1945 until 1970, beating the Conservatives into second place at every election despite the fluctuating fortunes of the two parties on the national scene.<sup>3</sup>

Richard Livsey was much influenced by several prominent Welsh Liberals – 'the Liberal political legends of the post-war period' – like Seaborne Davies, briefly the Liberal MP for the Carnarvon Boroughs (Lloyd George's old seat) in 1945, Roderic Bowen MP (Cardiganshire), Sir Rhys Hopkin Morris MP (Carmarthenshire), and Clement Davies MP (Montgomeryshire), who was also the Liberal Party leader from 1945 until 1956:

Davies spoke a lot around Wales about the need for a Welsh parliament and many other Liberal causes. Although he wasn't always that good a speaker, he could draw a substantial crowd. I recall one meeting in 1959 in Builth Wells in which we had over 300 people in attendance. Davies was also a practical politician planning for the future. In this respect he selected Emlyn Hooson as his successor three years before his death. This helped Emlyn build up his profile in the seat and go on to win it in 1962.<sup>4</sup>

It was largely the influence of these men which made Livsey a committed Liberal and he joined the party in 1960. He was immediately asked to consider standing as the candidate for Brecon and Radnor, but the necessary resources were simply not available locally and, at 25 years of age, he also felt too inexperienced politically to stand for selection. Consequently no Liberal candidate stood in the constituency in 1964 as had also happened in 1959.

Richard Livsey enjoyed a varied life before eventually entering the House of Commons in July 1985 at the age of 50. In 1961 he moved to Galloway in Scotland to work for a year as an Assistant Farm Manager on one of the ICI company's farms; this was the period when he met Rene, his future wife. He was then transferred to Northumberland where he worked as ICI's agricultural development officer for the next five years. When Livsey left ICI, it was to return to Scotland to become Farm Manager of the Blair Drummond Estate in Perthshire where he was to remain for four enjoyable years. From 1971 until 1985, he was a senior lecturer in Farm Management at the Welsh Agricultural College (WAC), Llanbadarn Fawr, near Aberystwyth, initially under the leadership of Dr David Morris. Livsey played an important



role in the setting up of the pioneering college and thereafter in providing a wide range of exciting and challenging academic courses. He and his wife also farmed some sixty acres of land at a small-holding at Llanon in Cardiganshire.

Despite being based in Scotland at the time, he played some part in the Liberal campaign in the Carmarthenshire by-election of July 1966 when, disappointingly for the party, the Liberal candidate D. Hywel Davies came a poor third, behind Plaid Cymru and the Labour Party: 'One, us Welsh Liberals felt we could have won. I think as Welsh Liberals this was probably our lowest point'.<sup>5</sup> Livsey stood unsuccessfully as the party's candidate for Perth and East Perthshire in the general election of June 1970 (where he polled 3000 votes, came fourth and lost his deposit in what had been a traditional Unionist seat), and he was then considered as a possible candidate in several Welsh divisions in the early 1970s. He was very conscious that, whereas Jo Grimond's leadership had led to something of a Liberal revival north of the border, Wales remained largely unaffected. Together with Geraint Howells, who had fought Brecon and Radnor in the 1970 general election, he argued for the re-organisation of the Liberal Party in Wales and for a clearer structure for policy formulation. Richard Livsey was one of a number of University and College staff at Aberystwyth during the early 1970s who much advanced the Liberal cause there; these included the scientists Dr Merfyn Jones and Professor H. K. King, and also George Morrison who was a member of the executive committee of the Welsh Liberal Party. In 1974 the Aberystwyth University Student Liberal Society, which had recently lapsed, was re-formed and soon attracted a substantial membership which much helped Geraint Howells to win the Ceredigion constituency from Labour in February of that year. Pressed to stand for Denbighshire, Richard Livsey declined on the grounds of his then lack of proficiency in the Welsh language, understandably considered nigh on essential for selection in the constituency. Moreover, 'My real interest lies in Brecon and Radnor, I am a native of those parts and have strong connections there. I am sure if I got the opportunity, I could do well . . . In the past my experience of Liberals in Breconshire is that they need quite a lot of badgering to be stung into action. However once that is done, quite a lot can be achieved'.<sup>6</sup> Although the governing body of the Welsh Agricultural College did not in any way object to Livsey standing as a parliamentary candidate and was prepared to grant him leave of absence to conduct a general election campaign, by the end of 1973, with a general election likely to take place the following spring, he himself still felt unable to go ahead. Preparation for courses at the college had proved unexpectedly arduous and time-consuming, his wife (who was expecting a child the following May) was increasingly unwell, and his personal financial situation at the time was 'a bit stretched'.<sup>7</sup> In the event Dr Noel Thomas was chosen to contest

Brecon and Radnor and polled a creditable 8,741 votes (19.4 per cent) in the February 1974 general election. The successful Labour candidate Caerwyn Roderick, who had taken over from Tudor Watkins in 1970, received 18,180 votes and the Conservative 15,903. By April it had become clear that yet another general election contest was likely before the end of the same year. Frustratingly both for him personally and for his party, Richard Livsey again felt unable to allow his name to go forward. As he wrote to Emlyn Hooson, the veteran MP for Montgomeryshire:

I continue to believe that a campaign of about three years' duration is needed to get into a winning position. In the meantime the initiative must not be lost. It could be that some members of the [Brecon and Radnor Liberal] Association may be reluctant to have a go again so soon after the last time, for reasons of cash etc. But I am sure you and Geraint [Howells] will persuade them otherwise, if they need such persuasion. Again it is a pity I cannot stand, particularly in view of the current situation in livestock farming, especially beef. This is – politically – one of the most frustrating years I have had to suffer. My ambitions will have to remain temporarily submerged.<sup>8</sup>

Eventually, in the 1979 general election, Richard Livsey did stand as a parliamentary candidate, and this, somewhat surprisingly, in the Labour/Conservative marginal constituency of Pembrokeshire.<sup>9</sup> On his adoption there in November 1977, Emlyn Hooson wrote privately to the chairman of the Pembrokeshire Liberal Association, 'Mr. Livsey has been active within the Welsh Liberal Party for some considerable time, both as a candidate and in other spheres, and has proved himself to be a person of outstanding ability and dedication. . . . With the solid base of support which has already been built up in Pembrokeshire, I feel sure that Liberalism in the constituency will now go from strength to strength'.<sup>10</sup> This certainly proved a wholly forlorn hope! In the dramatic swing to the right that brought Margaret Thatcher into Downing Street in May 1979, support ebbed away from the Liberals as well as from the Labour. Emlyn Hooson lost his seat in Montgomeryshire, and Livsey saw the Liberal vote in Pembrokeshire fall by a third. In Brecon and Radnor the drop in the Liberal vote was on a similar scale. Here Tom Hooson the Conservative aspirant (and a first cousin to Emlyn Hooson) defeated Caerwyn Roderick, converting a Labour majority of 3000 into a Conservative one of the same magnitude.

### **Livsey as a significant member of the Liberal Party outside Westminster**

By the late 1970's Richard Livsey had emerged as a highly respected figure within the Liberal Party in Wales and had lent his support to the formation and continuation of the 'Lib-Lab' pact formed with Callaghan's Labour

administration in March 1977: the only official bi-party agreement in Britain since the Second World War – until the formation of the Coalition Government of Conservatives and Liberals in 2010. At a special conference convened by the party at Blackpool on 21 January 1978, Richard Livsey threw his weight unequivocally behind the continuation of the innovative pact between the two parties: ‘The easy path to take would be to scrap the Pact now and throw away all the advantages we have gained and leave no chance of further gains in the future. But I think we are only just over half way through and this is the time to keep our nerve and support David Steel. The skipper and crew should not abandon ship halfway through the voyage’.<sup>11</sup> A belief in devolution was integral to Livsey’s political philosophy, and, predictably, he wholeheartedly supported the first devolution referendum convened by the Labour Government on St David’s Day 1979 seeking to establish a national assembly for Wales, potentially a major step forward.<sup>12</sup>

In the same speech in which he spoken up for the Lib Lab pact, Livsey continued:

As regards devolution it is essential that we see the Welsh devolution Bill through Parliament. The Welsh Liberal Party have been fighting for increased autonomy for Wales since the days of Lloyd George at the end of the last century. Now that our ideals are at last coming to fruition it is not the time to pull out and prevent a Welsh Assembly being set up. The Welsh nationalists are now opposing the Wales Bill on the grounds that it will ultimately lead to a federal system of government throughout Britain. That’s just what we want. The issue must be settled now – there will be no chance under the Tories. If we support the Pact today we will be half way to letting the Welsh Liberal Party realise the aspirations of the Welsh people. What is good for the Liberal party is good for Wales and is good for Britain. *Annwyl gyfeillion* [dear friends], fellow Liberals, don’t hesitate now. Our vote here today can show the way ahead for radical politics in Britain. We must have the courage of our convictions and carry on with our courageous experiment in modern government.<sup>13</sup>

The overwhelming ‘No’ vote in the Referendum of 1 March 1979 left Livsey highly dejected, ‘In hindsight I felt that it was the wrong time for a referendum. It was simply used as a way of voting against an unpopular Labour government and Tories milked this fully’.<sup>14</sup>

Another highly significant event of this era was the breaking away from Labour in 1981 of ‘The Gang of Four’ and its followers and the subsequent formation of the Social Democratic Party (the SDP), Interviewed in 2003, Livsey recalled his initial feelings towards the new party.

The SDP were a totally different type of people [from the Liberals]. Some were quite aggressive; others were quite friendly; many had absolutely no experience of politics at all. What they did give us was an important new impetus. This was

because many were active in the world of business and they also had a large membership on the ground in the south-Wales urban constituencies which we hadn't been in for decades. They were also well-up in publishing, printing and campaigning techniques, which the Liberals in Wales often lacked. The balance of members in rural seats, however, still remained predominantly Liberal. In Brecon and Radnorshire, for example, I recall there were 150 Liberal members and twenty-seven SDP.<sup>15</sup>

Richard Livsey first contested Brecon and Radnor in 1983 as the Liberal-SDP Alliance aspirant, when he came third. However, he succeeded in more than doubling the previous Liberal vote in the constituency – from 4654 in 1979 to 9226 in 1983. The Conservative Tom Hooson won again, and the Labour Party vote was nigh on halved. In the recent re-drawing of the boundaries of parliamentary constituencies, the division had lost some 12,000 constituents in the Brynmawr and Cefn Coed area of Breconshire, that southern strip at the top of the mining valleys. In consequence, political pundits ventured the opinion that the Labour Party stood no prospect of recapturing a division which comprised Brecon, Llandrindod Wells, a number of smaller towns and hundreds of rural villages. It contained one of the largest farming votes in the whole of the United Kingdom, fully 17 per cent of the local workforce.<sup>16</sup> At this time no more than a small proportion of the farming community within the constituency was committed to voting for the Labour Party. Only one corner of the constituency remained safe for Labour – the area surrounding the still sizeable town of Ystradgynlais where there remained a massive Miners' Welfare Hall, a fissured monument by the 1980's to the age-old Socialist tradition of self-improvement and self-reliance. During the course of the 1983 general election campaign, Richard Livsey told the electors of the substantially revised constituency:

In Brecon and Radnor the situation is now far worse than at any time since I was growing up in Talgarth. I love this constituency and its people, but like so many before and since, I was forced to move away to find work. I know what it is like to long to come back to one's homeland, and the frustration of being unable to do so through lack of opportunity. The scourge of unemployment amongst our young people, and middle aged family people is totally unacceptable. Through Government policies our education, transport and social services have been cut to the bone. Powys has lost its intermediate area development status and that has cut us off from a lot of European and other aid, yet our people are some of the lowest paid in Britain.

... Do not be put off at this election by negative stories of the Alliance letting Labour or the Tories in. Due to Boundary changes in the constituency, 12,000 electors have left us in Brynmawr and Cefn Coed. The political map of Brecon and Radnor has totally changed. This is a new and great opportunity for you to cast aside the old politics. Be positive and vote for the Liberal Alliance.<sup>17</sup>

**The 1985 by-election**

On 4 July 1985 Richard Livsey finally entered the House of Commons as the Liberal MP, with the slim majority of 559 votes over the Labour candidate, at a high profile by-election held on the death of Tom Hooson. The by-election was one of the most notable electoral successes of the SDP-Liberal Alliance. It was the first Liberal gain in Wales since Sir Rhys Hopkin Morris's largely unexpected capture of Carmarthenshire in the 1945 general election and the first Liberal by-election



Fig. 1 Livsey after his election as Liberal Alliance MP for Brecon and Radnor in 1985. Photo: Srdja Djukanovic. Reproduced from the internet by kind permission of the Telegraph Media Group. Despite the relatively low resolution of the image, the picture captures the excitement of the occasion.

victory in a Welsh constituency since 1923. A Liberal had not represented Brecon and Radnor since the 1924 election when the sitting MP William Jenkins was defeated by the Unionist Walter Hall. As indicated earlier, in many of the intervening campaigns the party had been unable even to field a candidate.

Tom Hooson had suffered from ill-health for a considerable period. Although viewed as something of a loner at the House of Commons, he had earned deep respect within Brecon and Radnor as a conscientious, committed, hard-working constituency MP. Indeed, he was still working, signing letters to his constituents, only hours before he died: the victim of incurable cancer. Tom Hooson's majority of 3027 votes in 1979 (6.3 per cent) had surged to 8784 votes (23.2 per cent) by June 1983. In any general election, such was his local standing and personal vote, the seat seemed pretty safe for the Conservatives. But a mid-term by-election, when a government is inevitably unpopular to some extent, was a wholly different proposition.

On 26 May 1985 Richard Livsey was formally selected as the prospective Alliance candidate. His old friend and political associate Geraint Howells, having known of Tom Hooson's terminal illness, had tipped off Livsey as to the likelihood of a by-election, thus enabling him to re-double his efforts on the ground. Ever since the 1983 general election, Livsey had been nursing the constituency and had spared no effort to revitalise the local party organisation. An additional advantage was that Andrew Ellis, the president of the Liberal Party nationally at this time and twice its general election candidate at Newcastle-upon-Tyne Central, now became Livsey's election agent. Other fortuitous factors had intervened too. The Revd D. R. Morris,

the Labour candidate in the 1983 general election, was now sitting in the European Parliament at Brussels, while his successor as candidate at Brecon and Radnor, the academic Dr Richard Willey, had spent but little time in the constituency. Labour Party morale was conspicuously low at this time as the party nationally was dogged by severe internal disputes, during the leaderships of Michael Foot and Neil Kinnock, while the legacy of the miners' strike of 1984–85 remained fresh in the minds of the electorate. Brecon and Radnor did not even appear on the published list of the Labour Party's 130 top target seats at this time. Another factor was that the Conservative aspirant Dr Chris Butler also had no local links with the division and was given only a few weeks to campaign on the ground. Ironically, the wish of the local Conservative Association to have the by-election in September or October had been thwarted by the decision of the Conservative administration to move the writ on 10 June 1985 for the by-election to be held on 4 July.<sup>18</sup>

The famous (some might say 'notorious') Liberal by-election machine swung powerfully into action during the frenzied campaign, with party activists flooding in from all over the country, not a few of whom got totally lost trying to find the addresses of isolated voters. Prominent heavyweights from all the political parties began to arrive there in increasing numbers. Brecon and Radnor was the largest and the most rural constituency in the whole of Wales, and the one with the highest numbers of sheep anywhere in the UK! As described in the introduction to this article, the elongated constituency was also one of great contrasts, stretching from the sparsely populated uplands in the north to the once heavily industrialised town of Ystradgynlais in the south, from the borders of Cardiganshire and Carmarthenshire in the west over to the English borders in the east.<sup>19</sup> At the height of the keenly observed by-election campaign, *The Times* reported:

Brecon and Radnor is as near to being uninhabited territory as any tract of land that hopeful candidates ever went foraging into. Voters are amongst the rarest forms of livestock among its mottled mountains. If a rare human figure does plod into view, to be surrounded instantly by candidates eager to show off their command of EEC sheepmeat regulations and reporters intent on testing the mood of the nation, it is ten to one that he proves to be a backpacker from Birmingham. After a few rebuffs one begins to suspect that this is a form of protective colouring adopted by the locals: they will have increasing need of it in the weeks ahead.

Campaigning here is less a matter of door-stepping than of orienteering, and if the candidates all muster for the count without losing their way in the up-country lanes, they will have done well. The constituency is the largest in area in England and Wales, with only 48,000 voters scattered across wide-open acres of delectable landscape. Almost half the constituency lies higher than the 1,000 feet said to denote a mountain. The electoral statistics place Brecon and Radnor securely among the 50 prettiest seats in the House, and by moving the writ for a July 4 vote

the Government's political managers have given a host of political commentators an excuse for excursions into Mid-Wales while the hawthorn and cow-parsley are still at their best.<sup>20</sup>

At the core of Livsey's campaign was a call for novel approaches to tackle the inter-related thorny problems of unemployment and rural depopulation. He called for local assistance for locally based firms, a greater flexibility on the part of the Mid-Wales Development Corporation to generate new jobs, assistance for people wishing to set up new businesses, and a revitalisation of the local economy. He maintained that the political complacency identified by commentators could be attributed to the fact that scarcity of work locally meant that the division had fewer young people than most seats and more pensioners.<sup>21</sup> In the words of the *Daily Mail*, 'Out around the sheep pens, and beside the mud-spattered land-rovers, the Alliance candidate, smallholder sheep farmer Richard Livsey blends more naturally with the local landscape than the others. And the word of mouth goes that he is "all right". If constituencies need MPs who fit their profile, then the quiet spoken Mr. Livsey is probably the man for Brecon and Radnor'.<sup>22</sup> The record of the Conservative government on unemployment was generally unimpressive, there was an announcement that some £175 million was to be cut from the funding available for the payment of child benefit, and the personal popularity of Margaret Thatcher had dropped significantly since the heady days of the Falklands War in the spring of 1982 and the ensuing June 1983 general election campaign.

But, during the second week of the by-election campaign, the air at Brecon and Radnor was allegedly 'filled with innuendos, slurs and smears' when the Livsey campaign team distributed their second leaflet asserting that not only was their candidate a family man, but that he was also 'the only major party candidate with a secure family background':

Most people feel Brecon and Radnor deserves a local M.P., in touch with local opinions, able to really represent local needs and interests. Richard Livsey could do that. According to the *Daily Telegraph*, 'He is the last authentic local candidate'. Richard is the only major party candidate in this election with a secure family background, and that's important. Richard knows how important the values and traditions of family life are. This area is Richard's home and he shares our own deep pride and love for mid-Wales. Our concerns are his concerns and, with his many local contacts and interests, Richard could be relied upon to continue our long-standing tradition of independent and fair-minded representation in Parliament.<sup>23</sup>

This was an unpleasant reflection on the Conservative contender Chris Butler who, at 34 years of age, was still single, and more particularly on the

Labour candidate Dr Richard Willey who had lived with his 'common law wife' Celia for sixteen years without going through a formal marriage ceremony. Chris Butler declared at his next press conference that he was indeed 'deeply offended' by the leaflet, 'A man who started out being Mr Nice has become Mr Nasty. I would like an apology for that remark'. Initially, Richard Livsey declared in response that his Conservative opponent had become 'over-sensitive' to the implications of the leaflet, but soon felt obliged to issue 'an unreserved apology', asserting that he himself had not, in fact, approved the content of the leaflet which was the work of 'the hardened backroom boys of the Liberal Party'. But by this time the offensive literature had found its way into every home in the constituency and, although later withdrawn, it would inevitably make an impact.<sup>24</sup> Personal attacks had begun to dominate the local campaign – at least according to the media. *The Guardian* reported that, on the following Saturday, Nicholas Edwards, the Secretary of State for Wales, had told delegates at the Welsh Conservative Party conference at Llandudno that the opposition candidates in the by-election had been behaving like 'a mixture of the mafia and the mentally handicapped'.<sup>25</sup> According to the *Liberal News*, the Conservatives saw Richard Livsey as 'a loser, a split choice, a ditherer, an opportunist, a political nomad and not his own man'.<sup>26</sup> Other views were, however, more sympathetic. During the course of the campaign it had been suggested to those on the left-wing of Plaid Cymru that, as it was such a close campaign, the party should not put up its own candidate, and rather lend support to the Labour aspirant Dr Richard Willey. Party leader Dafydd Wigley responded that it would be more fitting to throw their weight behind Richard Livsey.<sup>27</sup>

In the aftermath of the striking by-election victory, *The Times* political correspondent wrote of the newly elected MP, 'He is not a man of outward brilliance, and as a public speaker he is flat and a little diffident. But he has a real warmth, especially in face-to-face contacts, and he has the advantage over his main rivals of looking like a man mature and at home in the workaday world, slow-spoken and reassuring and not like a product of some rarefied political environment'.<sup>28</sup> In the House of Commons Livsey became one of a group of three Welsh Liberal MPs: the others being Geraint Howells (Ceredigion) and Alex Carlile who had re-captured Montgomeryshire from the Conservatives in 1983. After the result had been declared, Carlile had told the euphoric audience, 'With the three constituencies of Ceredigion, Montgomery, and Brecon and Radnor, the Liberals now represent between 1.5 and 2 million acres of Wales'. On the same occasion the agent Andrew Ellis claimed a new principle of proportional representation 'Liberals now represent more land area in the UK than the entire Labour Party'.<sup>29</sup>





Fig. 2 Livsey at market: 'he had the advantage of looking at home in the workaday world'.

Photo: Brecon and Radnor Liberal Democrats

Richard Livsey's success was widely claimed to be 'a rebirth of Liberalism in Wales',<sup>30</sup> and his victory was of much significance to his reviving a party which now had 18 MPs sitting in the House of Commons and, for the first time since 1956, three MPs from Wales. The experience of campaigning together during the hard fought by-election campaign had also proved highly beneficial in cementing the bonds between the two Alliance parties in Wales.

### **A Parliamentary Career: ups and downs in a marginal seat**

As Livsey took the oath of allegiance on assuming his seat in the Commons, the Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher congratulated the new MP, but ventured the opinion that 'he might well not be around for long'. Party loyalists, however, staked their hopes on the fact that six of the Liberal victors in by-elections during the previous twenty years were still at Westminster: David Steel, Cyril Smith, Clement Freud, Alan Beith, David Alton and Simon Hughes.<sup>31</sup> Richard Livsey was immediately rewarded at Westminster with his party's agriculture portfolio and attacked the Thatcher government over the rapidly declining fortunes of agriculture in Wales. During an

Opposition day in the House of Commons the following February, he chastised the government for its ineffectual record on farming, 'I have been in the industry thirty years and have never seen such a time when the industry shows such a lack of confidence'.<sup>32</sup> His rhetoric drew attention to the severe problems faced by the Welsh farming communities, and also hardened the resolve of the Conservatives to re-capture the constituency at the first available opportunity.<sup>33</sup>

Richard Livsey was re-elected at Brecon and Radnor in the 1987 general election, but now with an even slimmer majority, determined after several recounts, of just 56 votes, and on this occasion over the Conservatives. Now he campaigned on his record as an excellent constituency MP and on the slogan 'Everybody knows somebody who has been helped by Richard Livsey'.<sup>34</sup> In this general election campaign, he was given responsibility for his party's countryside portfolio, while Geraint Howells assumed responsibility for 'Wales' and Alex Carlile for legal affairs.<sup>35</sup> In spite of their nationwide portfolios, the three Welsh Liberal MPs did most of their election campaigning within Wales, publicizing the Welsh manifesto of the Alliance parties entitled *Wales, the Way Forward: the Time has Come* and immensely proud that an Alliance candidate was now able to stand in every single Welsh constituency. In a moving tribute to Livsey at the Lloyd George weekend school held at Llandrindod Wells in February 2011, his energetic local agent in 1987, Celia Thomas (subsequently Baroness) recalled:

Two years later [i.e. in 1987], the General Election presented a formidable challenge. The by-election unit had gone, and I was asked to be his agent – a most daunting task. I discovered that he was a very popular and well-loved MP who knew every inch of his vast constituency and many of his constituents personally, for whom he worked his socks off. But nothing was simple. Before we mapped out his itinerary, he said, in his rather mournful voice: "Celia, there's something you ought to know about me." My heart sank. But he went on: "I just can't live on sandwiches for lunch." Phew, what a relief – and so a pub lunch was factored in each day. But his next instruction was more than a little frustrating. He believed that he must be seen in the north and south of his constituency every day, which meant that he spent a huge amount of time on the road. He was also determined to hold meetings in every village and town, enjoying the challenge of the occasional difficult question from one or two keen to catch him out.<sup>36</sup>

Brecon and Radnor had now become one of the most marginal seats in the whole of the United Kingdom. On his return to Parliament, Richard Livsey was at once appointed the Liberal Democrat's new Welsh leader and the party's Shadow Secretary of State for Wales, a popular choice, although there were some former SDP members who grumbled at the apparent dominance of the Liberals within the merged party. He served as Liberal Party spokesman

on agriculture, 1985–87, and as Alliance spokesman on agriculture and the countryside and on Welsh Affairs, 1987–92. He also served as the Leader of the Welsh Liberal Democrats and Party Spokesman on Wales from 1988 until 1992. In addition, he was a member of the Welsh Select Affairs Committee. Following poor Liberal Democrat by-election results in Wales and elsewhere in the UK during 1988, there was a debate on a new name for the united party some pressing for the total deletion of the word ‘Liberal’ from its title.<sup>37</sup> Livsey joined forces with Geraint Howells and Alex Carlile in advocating that the party should become known as the ‘Liberal Democrats’ and the party in Wales as the ‘Welsh Liberal Democrats’, changes eventually approved by a ballot of all party members in the UK in October 1989. Richard Livsey was the only prominent Welsh Liberal to come out strongly in support of the election of Paddy Ashdown (who conspicuously lacked popular support in Wales), rather than Alan Beith, as the leader of the new party as successor to David Steel in July 1988:

I was a close friend of Alan Beith, but I still believed that Ashdown had greater potential. He was a different kind of leader. [David] Steel had got involved in Wales during election times; his helicopter tours to Ceredigion during election time were very useful. Ashdown was much more active within Wales, though. There was a large Liberal faction in favour of Beith within Wales, as he was seen as a traditional Liberal. Ashdown’s disciplined lifestyle, however, had made him a greater political force. Therefore I got involved in Ashdown’s campaign from the very start. During the campaign we met in his flat in London every morning. Thankfully, although the first few years were not that fruitful, Ashdown’s leadership provided us with some of our greatest post-war successes.<sup>38</sup>

Having contributed to the up-hill Alliance by-election campaigns at Pontypridd and the Vale of Glamorgan in 1989, Richard Livsey also participated actively in the lively Monmouth by-election campaign of May 1991, helping to bring about a creditable vote of 11,164 (24.8 per cent) for the Liberal candidate Frances David – ‘an excellent candidate and a seasoned campaigner’<sup>39</sup> – in a division which bordered on Brecon and Radnor and gave the party in Wales a major boost. He reflected, ‘People were fed up with the Tories at this time and they came across to us in droves. This was a much more rural seat like those we held in mid-Wales and we felt at home there. Frances’s vote reflected this fact’.<sup>40</sup> As the next general election campaign inevitably loomed, the MP for Brecon and Radnor spared no effort to bring his constituency’s many problems to the attention of the House of Commons.

In the 1992 general election Livsey was narrowly defeated by Conservative Jonathan Evans by the agonizingly tiny margin of only 130 votes, although Livsey’s personal vote had actually increased by 1338. Celia Thomas has again recalled the course of events:

Then came the next General Election and once more I was asked to be his agent. This time the hunting issue was very much to the fore, and Richard was in a dilemma, which is when I saw the stubborn side of his character. I urged him to make his position clear, but he declined, saying that although he had nine hunts in his constituency, he had actually received more letters against hunting, mainly from the Ystradgynlais area, and didn't want to inflame passions. Besides, he thought, quite understandably, that there were far more pressing issues to speak about, such as the real poverty in much of the rural economy. But Brecon & Radnor was targeted by the British Field Sports Society, who characterised his position as being anti-fox hunting, and Richard lost the seat by just 130 votes – perhaps the only constituency in the country where hunting may have made a difference.<sup>41</sup>

The issue of hunting came in an election, won by the Conservatives, where the Liberal Democrats showed a decline and the Labour party advanced. Richard Livsey later reflected on his loss of the seat: 'I had always been pro-hunting but this didn't become evident enough in the campaign and it cost me the vital votes I needed to keep the seat. Also, during the campaign I put



Fig. 3 Looking back on his 1992 defeat, Livsey said 'I had always been pro-hunting but this didn't become evident enough in the campaign'.

Photo: Brecon and Radnor Liberal Democrats

too much time in as the Welsh party leader in other constituencies. This was at the expense of my own constituency and my support there suffered'.<sup>42</sup>

While outside the House of Commons, Richard Livsey faced a period of unemployment, and then served as the deputy director and subsequently the development manager for ATB-Landbase Cymru from 1993 until 1997. Then, in the 1997 general election, following a dynamic local campaign based on support for public services, small businesses and farms. Livsey was able to re-capture the seat by the impressively wide margin of more than 5,000 votes to become one of a solid cohort of 46 Liberal Democrat MPs in the new Parliament. This was the general election in which 'New Labour' came to power under the leadership of Tony Blair with a landslide majority in the House of Commons. Nationally, there was little overall change in the percentage of votes cast for the Liberal Democrats, but tactical voting was a significant factor in certain constituencies.<sup>43</sup> This was well illustrated in Brecon and Radnor where every single leaflet circulated by the Liberal Democrats was emphatic that 'only Richard Livsey can defeat the Tories'. In addition, the local campaign team's performance was second-to-none, their efforts buttressed still further by canvassers from neighbouring constituencies. 'Both the Welsh and the Federal (National) Liberal party targeted the seat, which gave us a lot of resources there. We were also able to do a private opinion poll in the seat which meant that we could target the messages we needed to win'.<sup>44</sup> In the process he had the satisfaction of ousting the sole remaining Conservative MP in Wales, Jonathan Evans. As Brecon and Radnor was the last Welsh constituency to declare in 1997, the re-elected MP rejoiced in his key role in creating within Wales 'a Tory-free zone' for the first time ever since the Liberal landslide victory of 1906.<sup>45</sup> No longer was the Brecon and Radnor division transparently marginal! Immediately following his re-election, Richard Livsey was appointed a member of the Welsh Affairs Select Committee and of the Constitution Reform Strategy Committee. He was also his party's spokesman for Wales.

### **Service in the Upper House and support for devolution**

In March 2000, stubbornly unwilling to continue as an MP into his seventies, Richard Livsey announced his intention of retiring from the House of Commons at the next general election. He was undoubtedly also keenly aware of the resurgence of the Conservatives within his constituency and felt that a younger candidate was required. He thus left parliament at the general election of 2001 and, on the recommendation of Charles Kennedy, immediately entered the House of Lords as Baron Livsey of Talgarth. In the Upper House, he became his party's spokesman on agriculture and countryside affairs, was made a member of the European Environment and Rural Affairs Committee

and became President of the EU Movement in Wales. From the House of Lords he campaigned vigorously for registered hunting, rather than a hunting ban, being now released from his earlier caution. The House of Lords always warms to experts, and Richard Livsey's impressive knowledge on all matters to do with farming, the countryside, the rural economy and Wales, was much appreciated in the less combative atmosphere of the Upper House.

Livsey's support for the 'Yes' campaign during the 1979 referendum on a Welsh Assembly has already been described, and his enthusiasm for devolution remained undimmed. On one occasion, when the Speaker of the House of Commons had failed to call a single Opposition MP from Wales to speak in a debate on devolution, Richard Livsey was unrestrained in his indignation, 'As a Welshman, I am used to being treated with contempt, but I would not have expected my nation to be disgraced in this way in this House'.<sup>46</sup> He continued thereafter to be central to the pro-devolution cause and was the leader of the Liberal Democrat campaign in the narrowly successful Welsh devolution referendum in 1997, certainly contributing to raising the 'Yes' vote within largely intransigent Powys, which had polled a most substantial 'No' vote in 1979. Richard Livsey worked amicably for the cause of devolution with leading figures from the other political parties in Wales including Peter Hain, Ron Davies, Dafydd Wigley and Ieuan Wyn Jones. He and Mike German were by far the most frequently broadcast 'media faces' of the Welsh Liberal Democrats during the campaign. Livsey rather dramatically took to the stage at the Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama at Cardiff alongside Ron Davies, the then Labour Welsh Secretary of State, Dafydd Wigley, Plaid Cymru leader, and the other campaign leaders as the extremely narrow result in favour of devolution was announced. As he left the count, Livsey was mobbed by groups of zealous teenagers revelling in the outcome. Recalling the campaign in an interview with the *Western Mail* in 2009, he said: 'We had the right people in the right place at the right time. We were all working for the same objective and we knew where we were going. If other personalities had been involved, a different mix of people, it could have been diabolical'.<sup>47</sup>

### **Assessments and Conclusions**

Richard Livsey was a man of honour and decency who was loved and respected by his constituents, colleagues and by politicians of all parties. One scribe complained that Livsey's 'melancholy drone' left him with a strong desire to emigrate. But what he lacked as an orator, he made up for in hard work and a kindly, gentlemanly air which won him firm friends across the political spectrum. He will be remembered particularly as a champion for the rural communities in which he lived and as an expert on agriculture. Despite

this, for someone used to running farms, Richard Livsey could be surprisingly impractical at times! During one election campaign, while on a visit to Margam college, south Wales, his car suffered a flat tyre and he had to appeal helplessly for someone to change the wheel.<sup>48</sup> Such incidents were commonplace during successive campaigns.

As well as being a central figure in Welsh Liberal politics over a 30-year period, Livsey's main success was to build Brecon and Radnor into a relative stronghold for the Liberal Democrats. But he had his failures as well. During his period as leader of the Welsh Liberal Party, the party never took off electorally, and the Liberal success in the Brecon and Radnor division was not exported to neighbouring Welsh constituencies. He did not do 'a Grimond for Wales'.

Although he had enjoyed robust health for most of his life, Richard Livsey died unexpectedly in his sleep on 15 September 2010 at his home at Llanfihangel Tal-y-Llyn near Brecon, at the relatively early age of 75 years. Among the hundreds of mourners who attended the funeral service held at St Gwendoline's church, Talgarth eleven days later, were Simon Hughes, the Deputy Lib Dem leader, Lord (Roger) Roberts of Llandudno, who delivered the moving eulogy, and Kirsty Williams, the AM for Brecon and Radnorshire and the Welsh Liberal Democrats leader – eloquent testimony to the respect in which Livsey was held by all generations within his party. On hearing of his death, Glyn Davies, by then the Conservative MP for Montgomeryshire, paid tribute, 'Sad to learn that Lord Richard Livsey has died. Like most people who knew Richard, I liked him. He was a very good friend to Mid Wales in particular, to agriculture and to the cause of devolution . . . Always thought he had a wonderful feel for his constituency of Brecon and Radnorshire'.<sup>49</sup> Vaughan Roderic, the BBC Wales political affairs correspondent, spelled out Livsey's accomplishments: 'His great achievement was to make us think of Powys as being the Liberal heartland, because it wasn't before Richard Livsey. Montgomeryshire was, Brecon and Radnorshire wasn't'.<sup>50</sup> This was quite remarkable in a division in which the Liberal cause had been moribund for decades and testimony to the contribution that a single individual can make – and this without great histrionic ability but through an engaging personality and a devotion to duty.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Jones, A G, 'Brecknock at the Crossroads – journalism, history and cultural identity in nineteenth-century Wales', *Brycheiniog* Volume 35 (2003), pp. 101–16.

<sup>2</sup> Deacon, R., 'Richard Livsey', *Journal of Liberal History* 81 (Winter 2013–14), p. 37 [cited henceforth as 'Deacon, "Richard Livsey"']. This extensive interview took place in March 2003 as part of Professor Deacon's ambitious research programme on the history of the Liberal Party in Wales.

<sup>3</sup> See Jones, J. G., 'Watkins, Tudor Elwyn, Baron Watkins of Glantawe, (1903–1983)', 'Dictionary of Welsh Biography on-line', accessed 17 December 2014. It is of some interest to note that Tudor Watkins was one of the very few Labour MPs from Wales from this era who was consistently loyal to the cause of devolution – wholly contrary to Labour Party directives.

<sup>4</sup> Deacon, 'Richard Livsey', p. 38.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>6</sup> National Library of Wales [thereafter NLW], Emlyn Hooson Papers, box 44, Richard Livsey to Rhys Gerran Lloyd, 31 December 1972, marked by RGL, 'Dear Emlyn [Hooson], Urgent, Can you please stir this up urgently[?] Richard fought in Scotland last time'. See also *ibid.*, Sir Russell Johnston MP to Emlyn Hooson, 23 February 1973, 'I think he [Richard Livsey] would be an excellent candidate and we were very sorry to lose him from Scotland'.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, Vivian Roberts, Acting Principal of the Welsh Agricultural College, Llanbadarn Fawr, Aberystwyth, to Emlyn Hooson, 10 December 1973; *ibid.*, Richard Livsey to Hooson, 4 December 1973.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, Livsey to Hooson, 23 April 1974.

<sup>9</sup> It would seem that the Pembrokeshire Liberal Association had already adopted Richard Livsey as its candidate long before candidate selection was considered by the constituency party in Brecon and Radnor.

<sup>10</sup> NLW, Emlyn Hooson Papers, box 44, Emlyn Hooson to W. C. Philpin, chairman of the Pembrokeshire Liberal Association, 24 November 1977 (copy).

<sup>11</sup> NLW, Merfyn Jones Papers, file 83, press release issued by the Pembrokeshire Liberal Association, 21 January 1978.

<sup>12</sup> The Welsh referendum of 1979 was a post-legislative referendum held on 1 March 1979 (St Davids Day) to decide whether there was sufficient support for a Welsh Assembly among the Welsh electorate. The referendum was held under the terms of the Wales Act 1978 drawn up to implement proposals made by the Kilbrandon Report published in 1973.

<sup>13</sup> NLW, Merfyn Jones Papers, file 83, press release issued by the Pembrokeshire Liberal Association, 21 January 1978.

<sup>14</sup> Deacon, 'Richard Livsey', p. 38.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 39.

<sup>16</sup> Compared with less than 3 per cent of the population of the United Kingdom.

<sup>17</sup> NLW, Merfyn Jones Papers, file 83, election leaflet of Richard Livsey, June 1983 general election.

<sup>18</sup> See Deacon, R., *The Welsh Liberals: the History of the Liberal and Liberal Democratic Parties in Wales* (Cardiff, 2014), pp. 218–19.

<sup>19</sup> See Richard Livsey's election address, June 1985.

<sup>20</sup> George Hill, 'Looking for votes over hill and under dale', *The Times*, 15 June 1985, p. 10.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>22</sup> NLW, Welsh Political Ephemera Collection, election leaflet in file BB/5, citing a recent column from the *Daily Mail*.

<sup>23</sup> NLW, Gwyn Griffiths Papers, file 50, by-election leaflet of Richard Livsey, June 1985.

<sup>24</sup> 'Liberals provoke family feud', *The Guardian*, 25 June 1985.

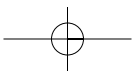
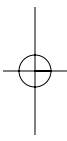
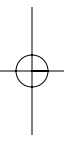
<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>26</sup> *Liberal News*, 12 July 1985, pp. 6–7.



- <sup>27</sup> Dafydd Wigley, 'Ysgrif goffa: Richard Livsey (1935–2010)', *Barn* no. 574 (November 2010), p. 30.
- <sup>28</sup> 'Winning style of friendly neighbourhood farmer', *The Times*, 6 July 1985, p. 2.
- <sup>29</sup> 'Marginal fight gives Brecon last laugh', *The Guardian*, 6 July 1985.
- <sup>30</sup> Kirsty Williams, leader of the Liberal Democrats in Wales, in the *Western Mail*, 18 September 2010.
- <sup>31</sup> David McKie, 'The new boy and the old lags', *The Guardian*, 10 July 1985.
- <sup>32</sup> *Liberal News*, 21 February 1986.
- <sup>33</sup> Deacon, *The Welsh Liberals*, p. 221.
- <sup>34</sup> NLW, Welsh Political Ephemera Collection, leaflet in file BA3/4 (general election 1987).
- <sup>35</sup> *Welsh Liberal Party Campaign Bulletin*, no. 17, February 1987.
- <sup>36</sup> Baroness Celia Thomas, 'Tribute to Richard Livsey', 25 February 2011, Lloyd George Society website, consulted 21 December 2011.
- <sup>37</sup> The Liberal-SDP 'Alliance' in fact came to an end in 1988 when they merged into the Liberal Democratic Party which still exists today.
- <sup>38</sup> Deacon, 'Richard Livsey', p. 40.
- <sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>43</sup> Tactical voting frequently occurs in elections with more than two candidates, when a voter supports a candidate other than his or her *sincere preference* in order to prevent what he thinks may be an undesirable outcome.
- <sup>44</sup> Deacon, 'Richard Livsey', p. 40.
- <sup>45</sup> Dafydd Wigley, 'Richard Livsey', p. 30.
- <sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>47</sup> *Western Mail*, 18 September 2010.
- <sup>48</sup> Noted in Livsey's obituary in *The Guardian*, 19 September 2010.
- <sup>49</sup> Website, 'A view from rural Wales: Welsh politics and countryside', consulted 20 December 2011.
- <sup>50</sup> Cited in Deacon, *The Welsh Liberals*, p. 303.

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## THE FIFTEENTH-CENTURY POET HYWEL DAFI AND HIS CONNECTION WITH BRECONSHIRE<sup>1</sup>

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### Introduction

Breconshire<sup>2</sup> was very much a part of the Welsh poetic scene in the later Middle Ages, with poets such as Guto'r Glyn from the north-east and Lewys Glyn Cothi from the south-west regularly visiting the homes of the gentry families. But Breconshire could also boast its own poets. Of these Hywel ap Dafydd ab Ieuan ap Rhys (*fl.* 1440–1485), or Hywel Dafi as he called himself, was the most prominent. He is not as well-known as his contemporaries, Guto and Lewys. There is only one mention of him in the index for the twenty nine volumes of this journal which appeared between 1955 and 1997.<sup>3</sup> Yet, a hundred or so of his poems are extant in various manuscripts, and on the basis of the surviving evidence he was the third most prolific poet of fifteenth-century Wales, a period described as 'the golden age of *Cynghanedd* poetry'.<sup>4</sup> Although he composed some religious verse and a handful of love poems, most of his poems take the form of eulogy and elegy to the gentry of Breconshire. He gained some renown on account of two poetical disputes with Guto'r Glyn. On two other occasions he found himself at loggerheads with two local poets, Huw Cae Llwyd and Bedo Brwynllys. Lewys Glyn Cothi refers to him in one of his poems. He recorded a journey to Bardsey, the traditional resting place of twenty thousand saints, and undertook a pilgrimage to Santiago de Compostella, sailing from Tenby to La Coruna in Galicia, accompanied by fellow-pilgrims, men and women, from the lordships of Gower and Glamorgan, and the counties of Carmarthenshire and Cardiganshire. It is also possible that he went on pilgrimage to Rome between 1455–8 during the papacy of Calixtus III, but the poem describing this visit is attributed, variously, to Hywel Dafi and to Llywelyn ap Hywel.<sup>5</sup>

This paper seeks to outline Hywel Dafi's activity as a poet and to draw attention to his connection with Breconshire. I hope to show that his poems not only convey the cultural activity evident here in the fifteenth century but also represent an important source of information about individuals and families, about life and events in this part of Wales.

### Hywel Dafi and his contemporaries

Hywel Dafi was not the only fifteenth-century poet to hail from Breconshire. Dafydd Epynt, a native of either Merthyr Cynog or Llywel near Sennybridge,<sup>6</sup> chose a name suggesting ties with the highland range to the north of the river

Usk, whereas the name adopted by Bedo Brwynllys infers connections with the commote of Bronllys or Brwynllys just to the north of Talgarth.<sup>7</sup> The name Hywel Swrdwal on the other hand bears witness to foreign influences in Breconshire. It is likely that he was a descendant of Sir Hugh Surdwal who was given lands in the parish of Aberysgir in recognition of his support to Bernard de Neufmarché who, by the last decade of the eleventh century, had infiltrated Breconshire from his base at Hereford.<sup>8</sup> Hywel Swrdwal and his sons, Ieuan and Dafydd, were poets, as were Huw Cae Llwyd and his son Ieuan. Huw Cae Llwyd was a native of Llandderfel in Merionethshire but was drawn to the area; he settled either in Brecon or in the vicinity.

The poets who were active between about 1330–1600 were highly trained practitioners. In their bardic schools, under the guide of a senior poet, they would have mastered the intricate patterns of alliteration which were the hallmark of *cynghanedd*, and demonstrated their ability and skill in the use of a total of twenty four metrical patterns, even if most of their verse was composed in a form known as *cywydd*, a fairly elementary mode in one respect but one which offered the poets a high degree of flexibility. Their most polished and accomplished compositions are in the *cywydd* form. They would also have studied *Y Tri Chof*, ‘The Three Branches of Knowledge’, firstly language and vocabulary, secondly history and lore, and thirdly genealogy.<sup>9</sup> Hywel Dafí was one such poet.

While Dafydd ap Gwilym (*fl.c.* 1330–50), Wales’s most brilliant poet, gained esteem on account of his love poems, his contemporaries and successors were primarily concerned with crafting embellished compositions of praise to the landed gentry class, as their name *Beirdd yr Uchelwyr*, ‘The Poets of the Gentry’, rightly conveys. They offered entertainment, but more importantly they performed the role of public relations officers in our day and age as they forged a definitive image of their patrons in their verse. The poets would travel from home to home, and their praises would be rewarded with lavish hospitality and with monetary and material gifts. Robes were especially welcome as recompense for praise. North Wales, and the north-east in particular, could be described as the power-house of poetic activity in the late Middle Ages, both on account of the number of poets to hail from that region and on account of the level of patronage offered. Poets were thinner on the ground in the south. As a result the gentry families were often at the mercy of itinerant poets from other parts of Wales. Poets from all regions flocked to Rhaglan where they were welcomed by William Herbert, Lord Rhaglan and later Earl of Pembroke. As many as seventy one poems were composed by twenty four poets to three generations of this family.<sup>10</sup> Lesser gentry could hardly match the reputation and wealth of William Herbert and compete to attract poets on such a scale. Their chances would be much greater if they could call on the services of a

local-born poet. What is significant about Hywel Dafi's career as a poet is that he was not obliged to travel far to seek patrons. Only two of his poems are addressed to patrons from North Wales. There were numerous families within convenient travelling distances who welcomed the opportunity to invite him to their homes and to reward him for his poems of praise. The services offered by the poet was as highly valued in the south as in the north even if the level of activity was on a smaller scale.

### **Hywel Dafi and Breconshire**

Breconshire had much to offer the medieval poet. Brecon was one of the largest and most prosperous boroughs in fifteenth-century Wales.<sup>11</sup> A total of a hundred and twenty one burgesses are listed in 1443 but family members and servants would have swelled this number. By the closing years of the century it is estimated that the population of the town would have been in the region of eight hundred. The roads, converging at Y Gaer, the site of one of the most important Roman centres in Wales, three miles to the west of Brecon, offered the peripatetic poet convenient routes in all directions, towards the vale of Neath and hence to Carmarthen along Sarn Helen, for example, or to the east following the river Usk towards Crickhowell and Abergavenny. Brecon, of course, was a foreign creation. It was established by Bernard de Neufmarché, and the castle at the confluence of the Honddu and Usk, the borough and the church, were triple symbols of the military might and authority of the new Norman lord. They indicated in no uncertain terms that the Normans were there to stay. By the fifteenth century, however, the Welsh had secured a foothold in the borough. Whereas 7% of the burgesses suggest Welsh parentage in 1412, that figure was nearer 25% by 1443. One indication that Brecon was seen as a less hostile environment was the selection of either the priory of St John the Evangelist (now the cathedral church of Swansea and Brecon Diocese) or the Dominican Priory at Llan-faes (now Christ College) as a final resting place for many families in the vicinity. In one of his poems Hywel Dafi describes how the body of Llywelyn ap Gwilym was transferred from Ystradfellte in the vale of Mellte, a tributary of Nedd, to the priory at Llan-faes and interred in the presence of a crowd of mourners, all dressed in black with the sound of the organ in the background. He doubtless witnessed the occasion. The main attraction for the poet, however, was the abundance of potential patrons. Many were the direct descendants of Bleddyn ap Maenyrch, the last ruler of Brycheiniog prior to the Norman invasion. According to tradition Bleddyn was killed near Battle in 1093, as he sought to retain control of his lands and halt the progress of the Normans. Hugh Thomas, in his 'Essay Towards the History of Brecknockshire' (1693) pays the following tribute to him: 'Thus fell Blethin ab Mainarch the last altho' not the greatest yet one of the Bravest Princes of the

British Blood a man of singular Virtues, and by no means deserving so hard a fate.<sup>12</sup> Rhys ap Tewdwr, king of Deheubarth, Bleddyn's brother-in-law and overlord, was killed in the same battle, and his death, and resulting entrenchment of the new Norman power, is recorded in the annals of 'The Kings of the Saxons': 'Rhys ap Tewdwr, king of Deheubarth, was slain by the French who were then dwelling in Brycheiniog. And then the kingdom of Wales fell'.<sup>13</sup> The descendants of Bleddyn and of his brothers, Madog and Drymbenog,<sup>14</sup> retained control over their lands on the hills of Epynt and in the river valleys of Nant Brân, Ysgir and Honddu, and it was to their homes that Hywel Dafi, Dafydd Epynt, Huw Cae Llwyd and others made their way in the course of the fifteenth century. Indeed, Hywel Dafi himself was a direct descendant of Bleddyn ap Maenyrch. Poet and patrons shared a common ancestry.

Biographical details concerning the poets are invariably rather limited. Dates of birth and death are often a matter of conjecture and dates of individual poems uncertain. Very little is known about bardic teachers and bardic education. The name of a poet's father and his place of abode is likewise often shrouded in mystery. In the case of Hywel Dafi we are fortunate that the names of his ancestors have been recorded even if very little is known about the poet himself. He was the son of Dafydd ab Ieuan ap Rhys Llwyd, who in turn was the son of Adam ap Rhys ab Einion Sais.<sup>15</sup> Poems by Hywel Dafi himself and by his contemporaries allow us to confidently locate him in Breconshire. In a joint elegy to Hywel Dafi and Huw Cae Llwyd, composed about twenty years after Hywel's death, Dafydd Epynt laments his loss in Breconshire (*Ni fu . . . Frycheiniog, freuach honno* 'Brycheiniog was never more frail'),<sup>16</sup> and Hywel Dafi confirms this geographical bond in a poem of his own to Breconshire, one of three extant poems to this country (*gwlad*).<sup>17</sup> He describes the inhabitants and praises their generosity and hospitality before turning his attention to the landscape and to the four rivers enriching the land, namely Nedd, Taf, Tawe and Usk, which he likens to the four rivers of Eden. He then mentions the walled town of Brecon (*tref gaerog*) in the centre of the three medieval *cantref* and implies that he spent his youth there in the care of foster parents, in accordance with Welsh custom:

Tref gaerog trwy fagwriaeth,  
Tref wen lle bûm gynt ar faeth.

(A walled town during [years of] upbringing,  
a beautiful town where I was formerly fostered.)

On another occasion he describes himself and Hywel ap Morgan ap Dafydd Gam as foster brothers (*brawdfaethi*), and it is possible that he spent some years in one of the three homesteads acquired by Llywelyn, Dafydd Gam's father, to the north of Brecon, either Peutun Du, Peutun Gwyn or Peutun Glas:

Brawdfaethi ÿm ni o'n iaith  
Ac o unwaed ugeinwaith.

(We are foster brothers in our nation  
and of the same blood twenty times over.)

It seems that his poem to Breconshire was composed in his later life and that he was by that time living in Merthyr Cynog (Fig. 1). One of his poems is dedicated to Cynog, reputedly Brychan's eldest son. Hywel Dafï refers to his wondrous torque, mentioned by Gerald of Wales in the twelfth century and still the subject of popular lore at the turn of the eighteenth. He expresses a wish to be laid to rest in Merthyr Cynog although the elegy by Dafydd Epynt suggests that his body was taken to the priory of St. John in Brecon where another from the line of Rhys Llwyd ab Adam was laid to rest in the seventeenth century.<sup>18</sup> That would have been most apt as Hywel Dafï composed one remarkable *cywydd* to the well-known Rood in the priory church.<sup>19</sup> The Rood is depicted in another contemporary poem,<sup>20</sup> but two unique details are only attested by Hywel Dafï. He implies that the Rood was richly gilded,<sup>21</sup> and that Christ was flanked by the two thieves who were traditionally known as Dismas and Sesmas,<sup>22</sup> although it seems that the poet was somewhat uncertain about their exact names – he calls



Fig. 1 The broad low tower of St Cynog's Church at Merthyr Cynog that Hywel Dafï would have known well.

them Dismas and Desmas. He also refers to the four Apostles, Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. One is lead to believe that statues of the four were prominent in the church or that the symbols associated with each Apostle were carved either on or near the Cross: a lion (Mark), an ox (Luke), an angel (Matthew), and an eagle (John). In two other pieces he addresses the Virgin Mary, and it might be significant that the borough church was dedicated to her.<sup>23</sup>

In all a hundred and four poems by Hywel Dafi survive in manuscript form, sixty two recorded by the poet himself in Peniarth 67, and safeguarded at the National Library at Aberystwyth. This again represents a significant Breconshire association. Poems were normally presented and then transmitted orally. In the fifteenth century, in the south-east, and in Breconshire in particular, some of the poems of our foremost poet, Dafydd ap Gwilym, were for the first time collected and recorded in a systematic fashion. Poets connected with this part of Wales also began recording their own poems, and examples survive of compositions in the hands of Huw Cae Llwyd and Dafydd Epynt mentioned earlier.<sup>24</sup> Peniarth 67 is an excellent example of the poet's pioneering role as recorder and guardian of his own compositions. In addition to his own poems, Hywel Dafi recorded some of the compositions of his contemporaries, Huw Cae Llwyd, Guto'r Glyn and Llywelyn ap Morgan; the two poems by the latter again associated with the Rood at Brecon priory.<sup>25</sup> Some of the manuscripts belonging to this period contain both prose and poetry. Hywel Dafi recorded one of the poems of Dafydd ap Gwilym in Peniarth 67 together with a small selection of prose items, one concerned with legal customs in Breconshire.<sup>26</sup>

### **Hywel Dafi and his patrons**

Most of Hywel Dafi's poems take the form of either eulogy or elegy to the county's native families. He did not have to travel far to seek patrons. With a few exceptions the majority can be located within the boundaries of Breconshire or at least within close proximity. Owain ab Ifor ap Rhys, for example, lived in Elfael, but his home in Llansteffan was located on the northern bank of the Wye which marked the boundary between the *cantref* of Elfael (later in Radnorshire) and Cantref Selyf (in medieval Brycheiniog). Tomas ap Ffelpod lived a short distance to the east, again on the northern side of the Wye, in Brwlai (Brilley) in Herefordshire. Most patrons however belonged to the three *cantref* of Talgarth, Cantref Selyf and Cantref Mawr. A sequence of poems either to members of the same family or to successive generations indicate an established and thriving poetic tradition. Hywel Dafi addressed father and son at Yr Argoed in the parish of Llanfihangel Fechan (five poems in all), and three generations of Y Beili-brith family in the upper Honddu valley in a series of seven poems. Gwilym Dew of Yr Argoed traced his family line to Bleddyn ap Maenyrch whereas Rhys ap Hywel, the first member who welcomed the poet to his home



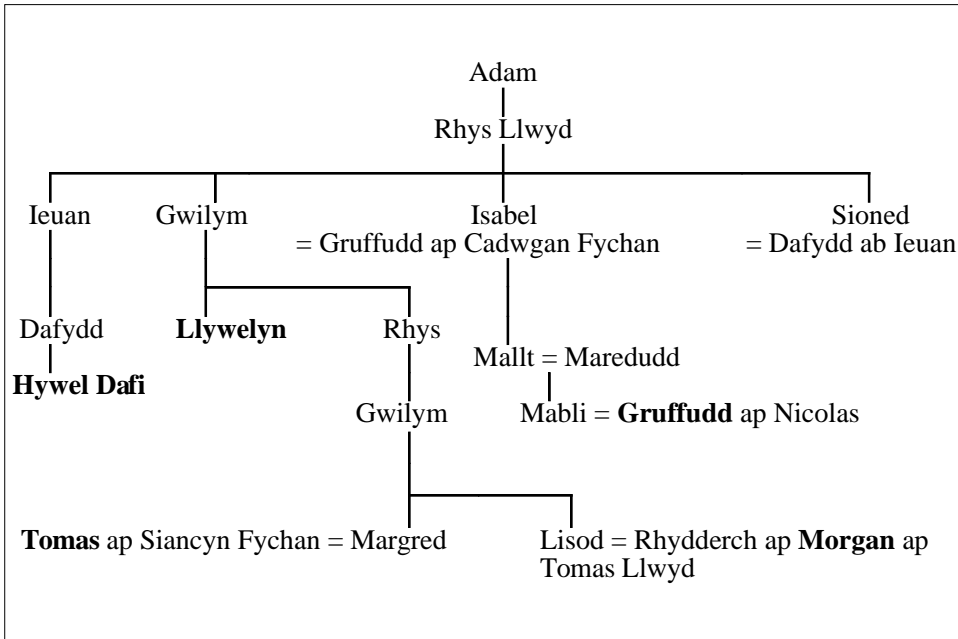


Table 1 Hywel Dafï and patrons: family ties (subjects of poems in bold).

For this and other Tables, I am grateful for the help of Dr Ann Parry Owen

at Y Beili-brith, was descended from his brother, Madog ap Maenyrch. The home remained in the possession of the family until the seventeenth century, and although the present farm dates from the same century it was built on the site of an earlier medieval hall.<sup>27</sup> Hywel Dafï sang to Rhys ap Hywel, to his two sons, Hywel and Morgan ap Rhys, and to Morgan's five sons.

Awareness of a common stock certainly facilitated Hywel Dafï's role as poet (See Table 1). He composed an eulogy and elegy to Llywelyn ap Gwilym, and a further elegy to his second wife Siwan. Llywelyn and the poet's father were cousins, and it is likely that Hywel Dafï was a frequent visitor at the home at Porthgogof in Ystradfellte. He also visited Tomas ap Siancyn Fychan at Aberysgir. Margaret, Tomas's wife, was the grand-daughter of Rhys ap Gwilym, Llywelyn's brother. Lisod, Margaret's sister, was the daughter-in-law of Morgan ap Tomas Llwyd of Llywel, likewise one of the poet's patrons. Dafydd ab Ieuan, the poet's father, was Sioned's nephew. She was closely related to Morgan ap Rhys, one of the poet's few ecclesiastical patrons, whereas her sister, Isabel, was Mabli's grandmother; Mabli was the second wife of Gruffudd ap Nicolas of Dinefwr. Hywel Dafï addressed Gruffudd together with Tomas and Owain, his two sons from his second marriage. Although described

as ‘the most unscrupulous, the most ambitious, and eventually the most powerful of the king’s subjects in West Wales’,<sup>28</sup> the poet felt confident enough to remind him that they shared a common ancestry:

Llin Rhys Llwyd, magwyd â medd,  
Llyna binagl llawn bonedd.

(The stock of Rhys Llwyd, nurtured on mead,  
behold a pinnacle full of noble pedigree.)

The poet’s patrons were tied by an intricate web of family connections, cemented by numerous marriages over several generations (Table 2). Gwilym Dew’s sister was Mawd and she married Morgan ap Dafydd ap Hywel Fychan. Hywel Dafu sang the praises of their three sons, Hywel, Llywelyn and Watgyn. On a later occasion he was invited by Hywel and his wife Sioned to their home in Y Trallong. Mawd and Gwilym Dew’s uncle from their father’s side was Dafydd Gam and he is mentioned frequently. He was killed at Agincourt (1415), an event reported in Shakespeare’s *Henry V*, and Hywel Dafu shares the belief of his fellow-poets that he was knighted in recognition of his exploits on the

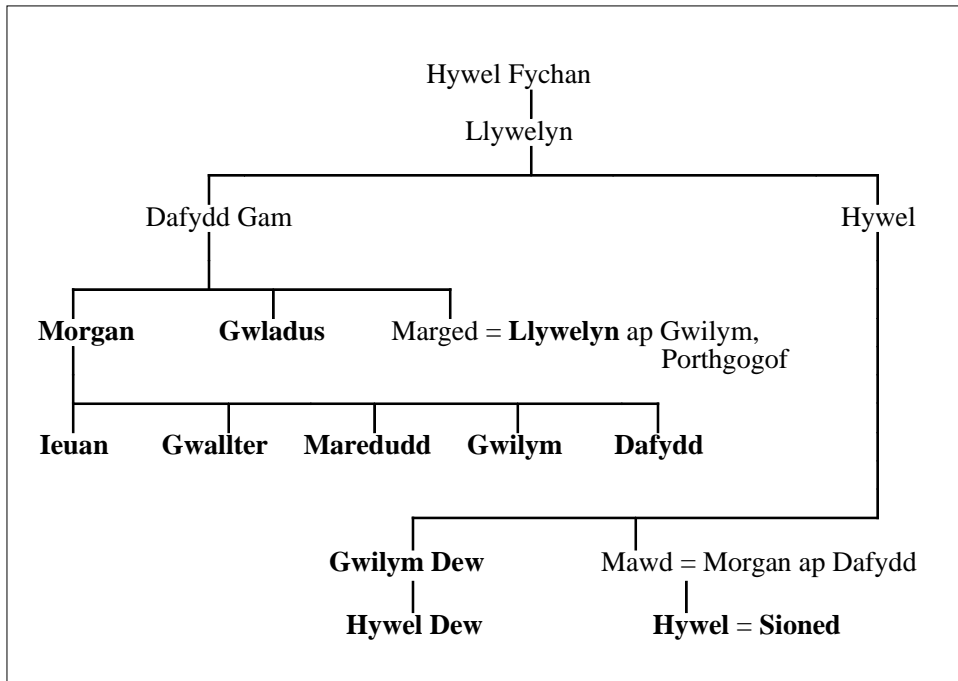


Table 2 Family connections of patrons addressed by Hywel Dafu (subjects of poems in bold).

battlefield. Hywel ap Llywelyn, Dafydd Gam's brother, and Mawd and Gwilym Dew's father, also fought at Agincourt. Dafydd Gam's descendants feature large amongst Hywel Dafï's patrons. He composed an elegy for Gwladus Gam, Dafydd's daughter, and addressed her brother Morgan and his sons on seven, possibly eight, occasions. Morgan fathered ten sons in all and Hywel Dafï describes five, Ieuan, Gwallter, Maredudd, Gwilym and Dafydd, either collectively or individually.

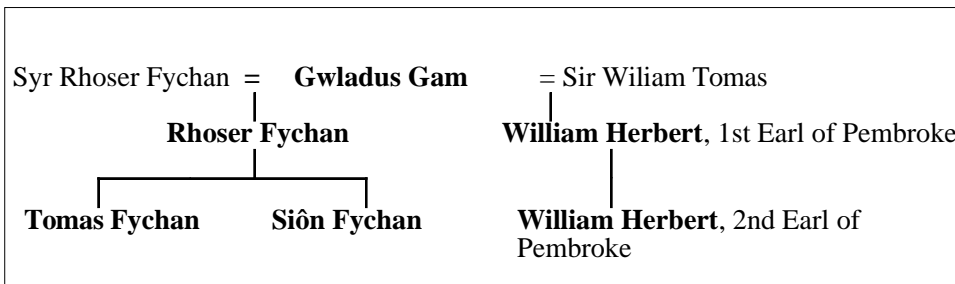


Table 3 Descendants of Gwladus Gam (subjects of poems in bold).

Hugh Thomas identified Dafydd Gam as one of Breconshire's most noteworthy sons. 'Besides the families above treated of there are several others of good Quality and Antiquity dwelling within the Borough, but the chiefest of note both of late and for several ages past, is the right Worshipful Family of the Games's.'<sup>29</sup> Dafydd Gam gained notoriety as a dedicated adversary of Owain Glyndŵr, but his pre-eminence derives from the two marriages of his daughter Gwladus Gam, first to Rhoser Fychan and secondly to Sir Wiliam Tomas (Table 3). Hywel Dafï addressed Rhoser Fychan, Gwladus Gam's third son from her first marriage, and two of Rhoser's sons, Tomas and Siôn. Gwladus Gam's most illustrious offspring from her second marriage to Sir Wiliam Tomas was William Herbert, the subject of three poems by Hywel Dafï, one composed shortly after his successful siege of the Lancastrian stronghold at Harlech and his elevation to the peerage as Earl of Pembroke in 1468. Two poems to William Herbert, the second Earl, are also extant. One greets Herbert and Edward IV at the outset of the king's French campaign of 1475 in which Herbert participated. Hywel Dafï summons the support and blessing of a long list of saints, some native, some of international status, to ensure the safe return of William Herbert and his brother-in-law, the king.

One dispute between Hywel Dafï and Guto'r Glyn took place at Rhaglan Castle, after 1452 when William Herbert was knighted but prior to the death of his mother Gwladus Gam around 1454. Guto describes his fellow-poet as

incumbent of Rhaglan and seeks to woo him to Gwynedd so that he may take his place and partake of William Herbert's hospitality. Hywel Dafï for his part insists that he will not leave *nef fydol*, the earthly heaven of Rhaglan:

Od oes nef ar ddaearen  
Mae 'n y graig mewn y gaer wen.  
Aed ef i newidio ôl;  
Ni fudaf o nef fydol.

(If there's a heaven on earth,  
it's within the stone inside the blessed fortress.  
Let him [Guto] go to change his spoor,  
I don't intend to leave heaven on earth.)<sup>30</sup>

This became Hywel Dafï's most popular and most copiously copied poem with over forty manuscript versions. It was on the basis of the poet's insistence that he would not leave William Herbert's home that he was described as *Bardd Rhaglan* ('the Poet of Rhaglan') and deemed to be resident poet. On the statistical evidence of the extant poems, it would be fairer to label him as the Poet of Tretwâr. Whereas five of his poems belong to Rhaglan a total of twelve belong to Tretwâr – two to Rhoser, William Herbert's half brother, seven to his son Tomas Fychan, and three to another son, Siôn Fychan. Rhoser Fychan (d. 1471) was the third son of Rhoser Fychan (d. 1415) and Gwladus Gam. He received Tretwâr as a gift from his half brother, William Herbert, about 1450, and quickly instigated a programme of reconstruction and expansion.<sup>31</sup> Although other poets visited his two elder brothers, Watgyn at Bredwardine and Tomas at Hergest, it does not appear that Hywel Dafï was amongst them. However, there is some uncertainty concerning the twelve poems to the Tretwâr branch of the Fychan family. The genealogical references are superficial and rather vague, not unlike poems by other poets to the family, partially explained by the eminence of the Herbert and Fychan descendants of Gwladus Gam. It is easy to identify the subjects in Hywel Dafï's poems as members of the Fychan clan – the allusions to the three armorial serpents of the family's forefather, Moreiddig Warwyn, are important pointers – but some doubts remain in the case of individual pieces. The proliferation of the same Christian names within core and extended family does little to alleviate the uncertainty. The absence of any reference to Bredwardine and Hergest on the one hand, contrasted with the numerous references to Tretwâr, support the assumption that the twelve pieces can be attributed to Rhoser Fychan (d. 1471) and his two sons. In a poetic dispute, at Y Slwch on the eastern outskirts of Brecon, the home of Tomas ap Siancyn ap Morgan who Hywel Dafï addressed on three occasions, Huw Cae Llwyd attests that his fellow-poet was oft to be seen at Tretwâr. In a further dispute with Bedo Brwynllys at Tretwâr Hywel Dafï claims

that he had been a regular visitor there over the previous nine years. Bedo interestingly suggests that his fellow-poet was large of body, the result of greedy consumption of food and drink at his host's table. A similar description is repeated in a satirical piece by Siôn ap Ffelpod who calls Hywel Dafï *Y bardd tew . . . Mawr ei gest* ('The fat poet . . . with a big belly').

There was Norman presence in Breconshire, and likewise in Glamorganshire, within a few decades of the 1066 conquest. In Glamorganshire, many descendants of the 'conquerors', as they are described in the poetry, had become Welsh by the sixteenth century, and the poet Lewys Morgannwg was warmly welcomed by the Stradling, Gamage, Bawdrip, Flemming, Butler and Turberville families. Breconshire was different in this respect. In his poem to Breconshire alluded to earlier, Hywel Dafï lists those of foreign origin living in Brecon and outlying districts, and he mentions the Havard, Gunter, Burchill, Swrdwal, Pitcher, Skull and Aubrey families. It seems that the numerous branches of the Havard family were the only ones to support the poets on a regular basis. Havard homes were visited by Guto'r Glyn, Lewys Glyn Cothi and Dafydd Epynt. Huw Cae Llwyd sang the praises of five members of the family whose involvement in the history of Brecon is symbolised by the Havard chapel in the priory church. They were Siancyn Hafard, Wiliam Hafard Hen, Siôn Hafard Dew, Tomas Hafard Hir and Gwallter Hafard. Hywel Dafï himself composed poems to Lewys Hafard and Gwallter Hafard, together with an elegy on the death of Gwenllïan, the latter's wife. There is no evidence of patronage by the Swrdwal family, but three members became poets, Hywel Swrdwal and his two sons, Ieuan and Dafydd. In an elegy on the death of Ieuan ap Hywel Swrdwal, Hywel Dafï implies a long-term collaboration and hints at a close bond between the two. No mention is made of Hywel Dafï in Ieuan's known poems.

Patronage by those in religious orders was extensive in North Wales throughout the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. This was not replicated in Breconshire and Glamorganshire.<sup>32</sup> The origins of the religious houses and the endowments granted by the first Norman settlers may partly explain this. No native Welshman was listed amongst the original benefactors of the priory church of Brecon, and at an early stage the church was bestowed upon the abbey of Battle in Sussex. W. S. K. Thomas also claimed that the 'Benedictines failed to make an impression on the native Welsh, associated as they were in their minds with an alien conqueror.'<sup>33</sup> These factors might help to explain the dearth of poetry to religious subjects in this part of Wales.

Only three poems by Hywel Dafï are addressed to members of the church, the first to a certain Siôn, the second to Gwallter, the third to Morgan ap Rhys, vicar of Merthyr Cynog. Gwallter, the grandson of Dafydd Gam, is introduced as the first member of his family to undertake religious duties; he might have been incumbent of either Llywel or Llandeilo'r-fân. The poem to

Morgan ap Rhys offers a vivid image of his solid and sumptuous adode at Merthyr Cynog:

Pond da lled, penty llydan,  
 Parlwr yr eglwyswr glân?  
 Simnai sgwâr fal tai 'Mharis;  
 Ni wŷr Ffranc hanner ei phris.  
 Maint llong yw ei mantell hi,  
 Main nadd o'r tu mewn iddi,  
 Lle'r tân i'n cadw rhag annwyd,  
 Lle'r ford a phob lliw ar fwyd.

(The parlour of this holy ecclesiastic,  
 a wide penthouse, isn't it vast?  
 A square chimney akin to the buildings of Paris;  
 the French would not know half its cost;  
 It's outside cloak akin to a ship's starboard,  
 the inside made up of dressed stone;  
 The fireplace to safeguard us from fever,  
 likewise the table with food of all forms.)

The layout of the garden is also a source of wonder:

Garddau – chwarterau torred,  
 Gwelyau'r llysiau ar lled.

(Gardens, divided into four segments,  
 vegetable beds extending in all directions.)

Generosity and hospitality are recurring themes in the poems. The poet lauds the provision of wine and good food at the host's table together with the various gifts bestowed upon him. Within the walls of Peutun Gwyn, Gwilym Fychan, for example, dispenses wine from barrels, mead from horns, rich honey – the poet's favorite – in addition to salmon and venison. Distinguished lineage, as expected, is a source of pride. The names of forefathers such as Einion Sais and Moreiddig Warwyn echo throughout the poems. Several Breconshire families were linked by marriage to the descendants of Elidir Ddu of Carmarthenshire whose name is also repeated. Wisdom and learning are other attributes which are emphasised. Rhys ap Hywel of Y Beili-brith was a teacher for all, the wisest since Adam and Bede. Many patrons shared a genuine interest in Welsh poetry and there are allusions to the pleasures of reciting the poems of the fourteenth-century poets, Dafydd ap Gwilym and Iolo Goch, and to the appeal of the music of the harp and *crwth* (a fiddle-like instrument with three strings). Gwilym Dew of Yr Argoed is credited with instructing the poet, possibly in the complex art of *cynghanedd*, and emending his attempts at recording his poems. Hywel Dafi also commends the endeavours of head of the family to keep the peace

and to safeguard both blood relatives and members of the wider community under his jurisdiction. We are informed that some of the poet's patrons undertook military duties in France in the latter years of the Hundred Years War, and likewise in Ireland. Hywel Dafï addressed Owain Dwnn of Cydweli who joined Richard of York's expedition following his appointment as lieutenant of Ireland in 1447, and it is likely that some of the poet's Breconshire patrons also took part.

### **Hywel Dafï and the events of his day**

Although Hywel Dafï witnessed the strife of the Wars of the Roses, the references in the poetry to current events are not numerous. Wales was ensnared into this dynastic struggle for power between the descendants of Edward III, the York and Lancaster factions, and Welshmen would have found themselves on opposing sides at the battle of Mortimer's Cross (1461) which bought victory to Edward (IV) and speedy and controversial promotion to his partisan William Herbert of Rhaglan. The antagonism generated by the Wars of the Roses in a purely Welsh context is evidenced by the fate of Rhoser Fychan, Tretw'r. Owain Tudur, Jasper's father, and grandfather of the future Henry VII, was captured following the battle of Mortimer's Cross, and it was Rhoser, reputedly, who led him to his death. Ten years later Rhoser himself was captured and Jasper took full advantage of the opportunity to extract revenge. No elegy to Rhoser by Hywel Dafï has survived, but it is in his poems to Rhoser and his two sons that we perceive the tensions and the uncertainties of the years 1460–85. It is impossible to date individual poems. There is no direct response to the death of Rhoser's brother, Tomas, at the battle of Banbury (1469) or mention of the murder of their brother Watgyn at Hereford in 1456. The sense of grievance and of animosity, between Welsh and Welsh, and between Welsh and English, is however prevalent.

Gwae'r Sais a ddêl i'w geisiaw  
 A gwŷr ei wlad ger ei law.  
 Nid â pen dros Hafren hir  
 O'i waedoliaeth o delir . . .  
 Ni chreded signed na sêl  
 Nac unSais yn ei gwysel.  
 Ni wŷr mil beth yw'r malais;  
 Ef a wŷr swrn ddifer Sais.

(Grief to the Englishman who would attempt to capture him  
 [Tomas Fychan]  
 with his fellow-countrymen at his side;  
 Not a single head of the same [English] blood  
 will return over the Severn should he be captured.

Do not trust the emblem or the seal  
 or the advice of a single Englishman.  
 A thousand people do not comprehend their malice;  
 Many do know the treachery of the English.)

Some of the seven poems to Tomas Fychan, Rhoser's son, belong to the 1470s when his half cousin, William Herbert, who possessed little of the drive of his father, was striving to retain the power and influence enjoyed by the first Earl of Pembroke. Others belong to the 1480s, and were possibly composed during the events of 1483 which manifested the extent of dissatisfaction of both Yorkist and Lancastrian contingents with Richard III's reign, and which paved the way for the eventual return of Henry Tudor in 1485. Henry, Duke of Buckingham, the nominal figurehead of the 1483 rebellion, travelled from his castle at Brecon to rendezvous with his supporters. Hywel Dafi remarks that others are now in power in London (*Llundain, mae eraill yndi*) and wonders who will now support this island (*Pwy'r un a helpa'r ynys?*). According to Hywel Dafi, Siôn Fychan came to the castle to uphold the interests of the Crown (*I' ddi i'r gaer i gadw'r goron*). We know that Tomas Fychan and his brothers stormed Brecon castle and were later rewarded by Richard III.

### Conclusion

None of the pieces in the poet's hand in Peniarth 67 have titles. Consequently no one has known for certain who his patrons were and to what parts of Wales they belonged.<sup>34</sup> The newly prepared edition removes this uncertainty and for the first time makes it possible to plot Hywel Dafi's activity. It shows that of the thirty homes visited, and the hundred or so individuals addressed, most belonged to the county of Breconshire. If the lack of details in the poems that touch on current affairs mean that they can only offer a general interpretation of the events of the 1470s and 1480s, by contrast, Hywel Dafi's work is very valuable in a social context as providing an introduction to the gentry and their affiliations, and as evidence of their cultural interests. Hywel Dafi himself was a proud native of this region. He enthusiastically described the people and landscape, and was adamant that *Gorau man . . . yw Brycheiniog* ('Of all places . . . Brycheiniog is best').



**Notes**

<sup>1</sup> The British Academy awarded me a Mid-Career Fellowship during the 2012–13 session in order to prepare a critical edition of the poems of Hywel Dafï. I wish to express my gratitude to the Academy for this support, also to Swansea University for granting a further semester of research leave so that I could complete the project. The poems have now been edited and will be published shortly as part of the University of Wales Centre for Advanced Welsh and Celtic Studies ‘Poets of the Nobility’ series.

<sup>2</sup> Breconshire came into being as a result of the 1536–42 Acts of Union, but this form will be used throughout the paper. Hywel Dafï would have known this area as Brycheiniog, see Richards, M. *Welsh Administrative and Territorial Units* (Cardiff, 1969), p. 241.

<sup>3</sup> *Brycheiniog*, xiii (1968–9), p. 128.

<sup>4</sup> Roberts, T. ed., *The Poetical Works of Dafydd Nanmor* (Cardiff, 1923), p. xi. Cynghanedd is a complex system based on an ordered use of alliteration and / or internal rhyme. A valuable explanation is offered in English by Rowlands, E. I. ed., *Poems of the Cywyddwyr* (Dublin, 1976), pp. xxvii–xliv.

<sup>5</sup> The poem is attributed to Hywel Dafï in nine manuscripts and to Llywelyn ap Hywel in thirteen. Llywelyn ap Hywel is named in the earliest but the couplet which mentions Calixtus occurs in the manuscripts naming Hywel Dafï as author.

<sup>6</sup> Thomas, O. ed., *Gwaith Dafydd Epynt* (Aberystwyth, 2002), pp. 1–2.

<sup>7</sup> It is possible that he should rather be identified with Brwynllys in Maclenydd (later in Radnorshire), see Lake, A. C. ‘Bedo Brwynllys, ei noddwyr a’i gynefin’, *Dwned*, 20 (2014), pp. 51–63.

<sup>8</sup> Evans, D. F. ed., *Gwaith Hywel Sierdwal a’i Deulu* (Aberystwyth, 2000), pp. 1–7.

<sup>9</sup> Williams, G. J. ‘Tri Chof Ynys Brydain’, *Llên Cymru*, 3 (1954–5), pp. 234–9.

<sup>10</sup> Lewis, W. G. ‘Herbertiaid Rhaglan fel noddwyr beirdd yn y bymthegfed ganrif a dechrau’r unfed ganrif ar bymtheg’, *Transactions of the Honourable Society of Cymmrodorion*, 1986, pp. 33–60.

<sup>11</sup> Davies, R. R. ‘Brecon’ in Griffiths, R. A. ed., *Boroughs of Medieval Wales* (Cardiff, 1978), pp. 46–70; Thomas, W. S. K. *Brecon c. 1093–1660, An Illustrated History* (Llandysul, 1991), chapter 1 ‘The medieval scene’, pp. 1–53; Rees, W. ‘The mediaeval lordship of Brecon’, *Transactions of the Honourable Society of Cymmrodorion*, 1915–16, pp. 165–224.

<sup>12</sup> Jones-Davies, J. ed., *Hugh Thomas’ Essay Towards the History of Brecknockshire 1698* (Brecon, 1967), p. 38.

<sup>13</sup> Jones, T. ed., *Brenhinedd y Saesson or The Kings of the Saxons*, (Cardiff, 1971), p. 85.

<sup>14</sup> Rhiwallon and Rhys Goch are also listed as sons of Maenyrch.

<sup>15</sup> Bartrum, P. C. *Welsh Genealogies AD 300–1400* (Cardiff, 1974), p. 109.

<sup>16</sup> *Gwaith Dafydd Epynt*, 22.7–8.

<sup>17</sup> Poems were composed in praise of Breconshire by Siôn Cent and by Llawdden. M.P. Bryant-Quinn discusses Siôn Cent’s poem in ‘Bro wych annwyl’: Cywydd Siôn Cent i Frycheiniog’, *Dwned*, 13 (2007), pp. 77–95.

<sup>18</sup> *Rees Williams, mercer, the son of William ap John ap Rees ap John Vychan ap Gwillim Gwynn ap Llewellyn ap Gwillim ap Rhees Lloyd ab Adam . . . died 26 November 1614*, see Davies, R. ‘Brecon, Owain Glyn Dŵr and Dafydd Gam’, *Brycheiniog*, xxxii (2000), pp. 51–60.

<sup>19</sup> For a text and translation, see Parri, B. ‘Crog Aberhodni’, *Brycheiniog*, xxxv (2003), pp. 19–36.

<sup>20</sup> It is attributed to Huw Cae Llwyd and to Ieuan Brydydd Hir. Bryant-Quinn, M.P. ‘Enaid y gwir oleuni’: y Grog yn Aberhonddu’, *Dwned*, 2 (1996), pp. 51–3, has favoured Ieuan Brydydd Hir as author whereas Dafydd Johnston is more uncertain, see *Llên yr Uchelwyr: Hanes Beirniadol Llenyddiaeth Gymraeg 1300–1525* (Caerdydd, 2005), p. 218. A newly edited version of the poem can be seen in Bryant-Quinn, M.P. ed., *Gwaith Ieuan Brydydd Hir* (Aberystwyth, 2000), poem 12.

<sup>21</sup> The sixteenth-century poet, Siôn Ceri, who also addressed the Rood, corroborates this detail. The statue of Christ was created ‘in the form of gold’ (*eurwaith lun*), see Lake, A. C. ed., *Gwaith Siôn Ceri* (Aberystwyth, 1996), 54.18.

<sup>22</sup> Cross, F. L and Livingstone, E. A. ed., *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church* (third ed., Oxford, 1997), p. 489.

<sup>23</sup> The castle and the priory church were located on the western side of river Honddu whereas the borough developed on the eastern side.

<sup>24</sup> Huws, D. 'The transmission of a Welsh classic: Dafydd ap Gwilym' in *Medieval Welsh Manuscripts* (Aberystwyth, 2000), pp. 84–103; *Id.*, *Cynnull y Farddoniaeth* (Aberystwyth, 2004); *Id.*, 'From song to script in medieval Wales', *Selected Proceedings of the Cambridge Colloquium in Anglo-Saxon, Norse and Celtic*, 9, (2008).

<sup>25</sup> M. P. Bryant-Quinn has shown that the two poems describe the garments for the statue which would have been employed on ceremonial occasions, 'Aur yw pris y wisg': Llywelyn ap Morgan a'r Grog yn Aberhonddu', *Dwned*, 16 (2010), pp. 51–92.

<sup>26</sup> Roberts, S.E. 'Legal practice in fifteenth-century Brycheiniog', *Studia Celtica*, xxxv (2001), pp. 307–23.

<sup>27</sup> Haslam, R. *The Buildings of Wales: Powys* (Harmondsworth, 1979), p. 363; *Brycheiniog*, xi (1965), pp. 70–2.

<sup>28</sup> Griffiths, R. A. 'Gruffydd ap Nicholas and the fall of the house of Lancaster', *Welsh History Review*, 2 (1964–5), pp. 213–31 (p. 213 in particular).

<sup>29</sup> Jones-Davies, J. ed., *op.cit.* p. 42.

<sup>30</sup> Translation taken from the website <gutorglyn.net>, poem 20A, lines 55–8.

<sup>31</sup> Radford, C. A. R. and Robinson, D. M. *Tretower Court and Castle* (London, 1986), pp. 4–6.

<sup>32</sup> Likewise, in a recent study of poetry and patronage in Gwent, Dylan Foster Evans concluded that 'As a whole, religious life in Gwent is not well represented in the poetry of the period', 'Talm o Wenttoedd': The Welsh language and its literature', c. 1070–c. 1530' in Griffiths, R. A., Hopkins, T. and Howell, R. ed., *The Gwent County History Volume 2: The Age of the Marcher Lords, c. 1070–1536*, (Cardiff, 2008), pp. 280–308 (p. 297).

<sup>33</sup> Thomas, W. S. K. *op.cit.* p. 43; also Appendix B, pp. 173–4.

<sup>34</sup> The importance of this manuscript was recognised, its contents transcribed by E. Stanton Roberts and printed in *Peniarth MS. 67* (Cardiff, 1918) as part of the 'Reprints of Welsh Manuscripts' Series.

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## BRECKNOCK UNION WORKHOUSE: A CENSUS-BASED PROFILE OF INMATES 1841–1911

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### **Introduction**

Public debate on government welfare policy has highlighted social and regional inequalities in British society. This is familiar territory to community historians who have drawn interesting parallels with the reform of poor law provision in the Victorian era, highlighting the financial burden of in-door relief on local ratepayers and the harrowing experiences of people consigned to institutional care.<sup>1</sup> Two genres of study have been published: administrative case histories;<sup>2</sup> and census enumeration profiles of inmates.<sup>3</sup> This study extends that endeavour to Wales and focuses on serial census enumerations taken at Brecknock Union Workhouse in the period 1841–1911 (Fig. 1).<sup>4</sup> The author confesses to an abiding interest in the topic.<sup>5</sup> In the early 1950s, as a schoolchild in Brecon walking slowly from home in Newgate Street to the St David's primary school in Llanfaes, he was ever-conscious of the fortress-like building in Bailyhelig Road: indeed, its somewhat foreboding hill-side presence had excited much ill-informed speculation with friends regarding the institutional régime and life-styles of inmates. Now, years later and from the more critical stance of the community historian, the author re-visits that tainted memory. This study underpins the scant administrative records archived at Powys County Record Office with census-based evidence on the social characteristics of inmates.<sup>6</sup> In that context, it contributes towards an understanding of the social impact of institutions like workhouses, gaols, infirmaries and boarding schools on the demographic balance and day-to-day functioning of county towns in nineteenth century Wales.<sup>7</sup> A brief introduction to the Poor Law Amendment Act 1834 and critique of census materials set the scene.

### **Poor Law Unions in Brecknockshire**

In the years between 1795 and 1834 the Speenhamland system of poor relief had provided the 'needy poor' with an allowance from the parish poor rate, adjusted to the price of bread and size of recipient's family. In 1834 the Poor Law Amendment Act placed an emphasis on the provision of workhouses and reduced outdoor relief to a minimum.<sup>8</sup> Administered centrally by the Poor Law Commissioners, this legislation introduced 630 Poor Law Unions across the country (comprising groups of parishes supporting a workhouse) each of which was administered by an elected Board of Guardians.<sup>9</sup>

According to some historians, the ensuing wave of workhouse building had acted as a deterrent to fecklessness and left the ‘undeserving poor’ in no visible doubt as to the intentions of state policy.<sup>10</sup> Hankin examines this claim using evidence from south Brecknockshire. For some destitute individuals, he concludes, the harsh workhouse régime compared favourably with personal experiences of grinding poverty and appalling living conditions, situations that were aggravated by episodes of economic recession and bouts of unemployment.<sup>11</sup>

The Poor Law Commissioners favoured long-established market towns as sites for workhouses.<sup>12</sup> Lipman confirms the underpinning logic ‘*The most convenient limit of Unions we have found has been that of a circle taking a market town as centre and comprehending those surrounding parishes whose inhabitants are accustomed to resort to the same market*’.<sup>13</sup> In Brecknockshire, the county town Brecon and smaller market towns Builth, Crickhowell and Hay satisfied this administrative criterion.<sup>14</sup> Brecknock Union (population 17,750 in the 1831 census) comprised a total of 43 parishes that extended across the Brecon Beacons and southern tracts of Mynydd Epynt, and lower-lying and more densely-populated parishes in the Usk valley close to the county town.<sup>15</sup> Builth Union (population 8,512 in 1831) combined 23 sparsely-populated parishes in the north of the county with nine parishes from neighbouring Radnorshire. In the south of the county, Crickhowell Union (population 11,305 in 1831) covered 10 parishes in the middle-Usk valley and Black Mountains whilst Hay Union (population 11,403 in 1831), in the east, amalgamated 11 parishes from Brecknockshire with nine from Radnorshire and five from Herefordshire.<sup>16</sup>

In Brecknockshire, the design and capacity of purpose-built workhouses was adjusted to anticipated levels of demand. The Poor Law Commissioners approved: Brecknock workhouse (designed, incrementally, for up 100 inmates) which opened in 1838 on a four-acre site provided by Sir Charles Morgan on Bailyhelig Road, overlooking St. David’s church in Llanfaes (Fig. 1);<sup>17</sup> Builth workhouse (60 inmates), completed in 1875, to the east of Brecon Road on the outskirts of the town; Crickhowell workhouse (170 inmates) rebuilt in 1871 on a steeply-sloping hillside in the neighbouring village of Llangattock;<sup>18</sup> and Hay workhouse (70 inmates), constructed in 1837, on the south side of St Mary’s Road. Although different in some details, these workhouses contained accommodation for resident staff, wards for able-bodied male and female inmates, and an infirmary. In addition, each had a central kitchen, storerooms and larders, wash-houses, toilets and laundries. Furthermore, contemporary building descriptions refer to chapels, ‘airing yards’, school rooms and play-space for infants.

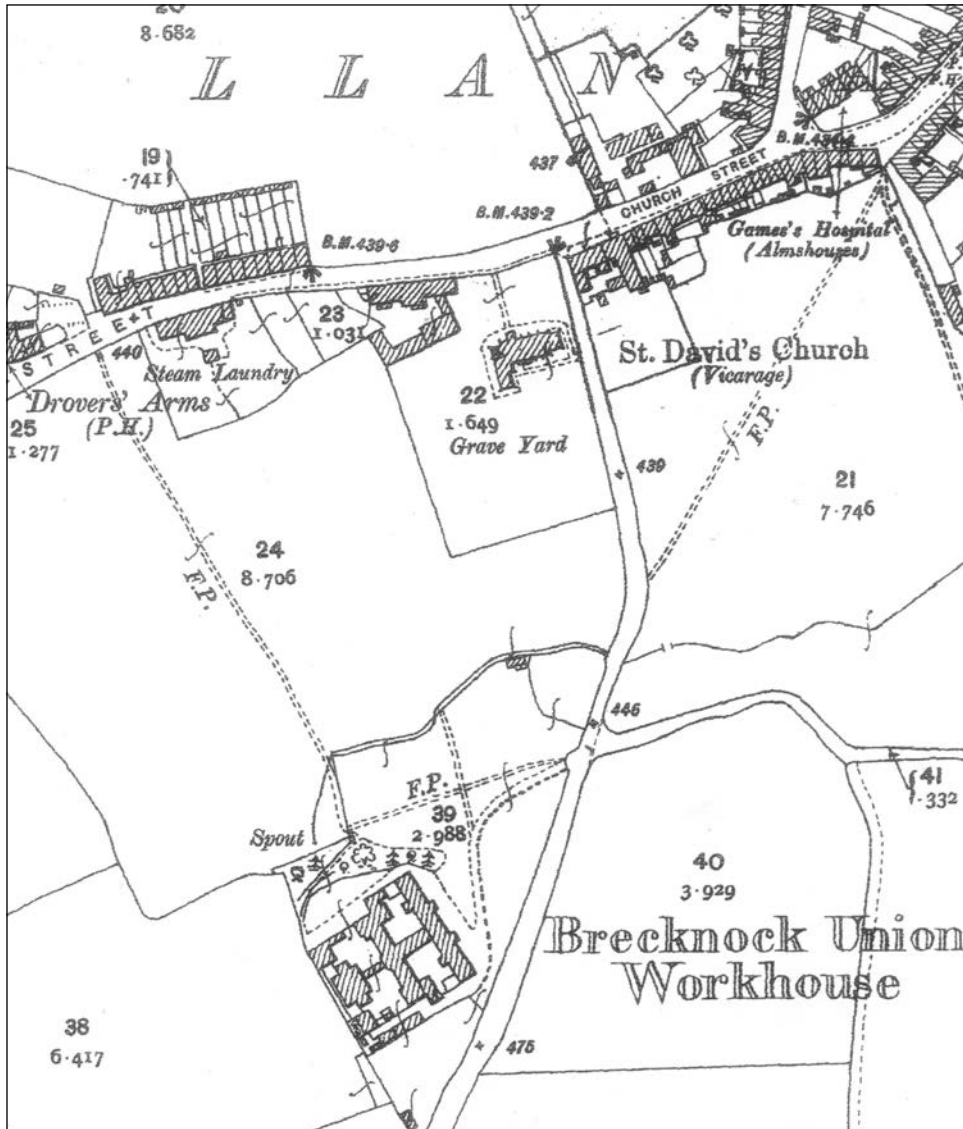


Fig. 1 Site of Brecknock Union Workhouse 1904

### **Census records for inmates: critique of content and coverage**

Decennial census enumerations for Brecknock, 1841–1911, provide an unique resource for a demographic study of the Union Workhouse.<sup>19</sup> In that period, locally-recruited enumerators were charged with recording the following personal details for each inmate: full name, sex, marital condition, age, profession or occupation, birthplace and disability.<sup>20</sup> Unfortunately, in 1841 the enumeration required less detail on an individual's birthplace and disability status; and age above 15 was recorded as the lowest value in the five year group. From 1851, however, the census collected additional detail on employment, language spoken (Welsh and/or English) and categories of infirmity (deaf-and-dumb, blind, lunatic, imbecile and feeble-in-mind).<sup>21</sup> Until 1891, The Union Workhouse was included in the enumerator's walk as a separate schedule in the sequential and numbered listing of domestic households. This changed in 1901 when Workhouse Masters were paid a premium to conduct a separate institutional enumeration to be submitted to the local Registrar by an authorised date.<sup>22</sup>

Written census records examined for Brecknock Union Workhouse varied in quality and print definition.<sup>23</sup> Text of the 1841 enumeration is legible and the enumerator's handwriting distinct. Notwithstanding the advanced technology applied in production, text captured on the 1851 CD ROM remains faint and the handwriting is difficult to decipher. More critically, in 1861 pages from the enumerator's book covering the Union Workhouse, part of the prison population and scattered houses on the fringe of Llanfaes were lost to the transcription process. In contrast, the 1871 record survives in bold, and legible handwriting; and a quality digital transcript for Brecknock Union Workhouse in 1881 was accessed online.<sup>24</sup> The CD-readable images of census pages in 1891 and 1901 were produced to an acceptable standard; likewise, the self-completed household household returns for 1911 examined on the *Ancestry.com* website. In each enumeration the management and support staff are listed first; fully-named inmates are then enumerated in a non-alphabetical and mixed-sex sequence. These personal records, 1841–1911, were transcribed onto Microsoft Excel worksheets in preparation for statistical analysis and the re-ordering of census observations on demographic variables.

Minor errors detected in the census records were corrected. These included the mis-spelling of place-names for birthplace and, occasionally, the assignment of a parish or place to an incorrect administrative county. It is important to note that fewer variables were addressed in the 1841 census enumeration. More problematic, but impossible to rectify in subsequent censuses, was the intermittent absence of entries in columns for (former) occupation and the educational status (as scholar) of young children. Moreover, the terms 'inmate' and 'pauper' denoting the status of resident were exchanged in different censuses,

*Brecknock Union Workhouse: a census-based profile of inmates 1841–1911*

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without a clear justification.<sup>25</sup> Particularly serious for this investigation was the action of Henry Kettle, Workhouse Master in 1891, who mis-interpreted instructions and recorded the former occupation of each inmate as ‘pauper’.

**Social profile of inmates***Complement of inmates and supervisory staff*

Table 1 profiles the inmates and supervisory staff resident in the Union Workhouse 1841–1911.<sup>26</sup> In that period the number of inmates ranged from a maximum of 102 in 1851 to a minimum of 59 in 1891. Although, in 1851,

		<i>inmate</i>	<i>pauper</i>	<i>vagrant/ beggar</i>	<i>staff</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>Inmates: females per 100 males</i>
1841	male	31	0	0	1	32	100
	female	31	0	0	1	32	
	<b>Total</b>	<b>62</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>64</b>	
1851	male	48	0	8	3	59	82
	female	40	0	6	2	48	
	<b>Total</b>	<b>88</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>107</b>	
1861	male	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
	female	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	
	<b>Total</b>	<b>n/a</b>	<b>n/a</b>	<b>n/a</b>	<b>n/a</b>	<b>n/a</b>	
1871	male	0	31	1	2	34	133
	female	0	44	0	2	46	
	<b>Total</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>75</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>80</b>	
1881	male	0	48	0	2	50	94
	female	0	45	0	3	48	
	<b>Total</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>93</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>98</b>	
1891	male	0	30	0	2	32	97
	female	0	29	0	3	32	
	<b>Total</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>59</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>64</b>	
1901	male	53	0	0	2	55	51
	female	27	0	0	4	31	
	<b>Total</b>	<b>80</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>86</b>	
1911	male	62	0	15	2	79	32
	female	25	0	0	5	30	
	<b>Total</b>	<b>87</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>109</b>	

Note: Whilst the 1881 total for male staff excludes Henry Kettle, the 13 year old scholar-son of the Master, the 1911 total includes Blodwen Williams, a domestic servant in the household of the Workhouse Master.

Table 1 Brecknock Union Workhouse: categories of resident 1841–1901.

a total of 14 Irish-born beggars (8 males and 6 females) belonging to three separate families were included in the enumeration, the absence of census records in 1861 conceals further evidence of famine-induced migration from Ireland.<sup>27</sup> In 1871, the census notes only one vagrant, an Irish-born beggar. However, the 1911 total for vagrants had increased to 15 males, three originating from central Scotland and one from Ireland. Throughout the study period, the ratio between male and female inmates fluctuated. For instance, whilst females clearly outnumbered males in 1871, the situation was reversed in 1901 and 1911. In other census years there was an approximate balance between the sexes.

With the exception of 1841, the resident supervisory staff consisted of the Workhouse Master, matron, (female) cook and (male) gate porter (Table 2).<sup>28</sup>

Census year	Surname	First name	Rel. to head of household	Condition	Age	Rank, profession or occupation	Birthplace county	parish
1841	Morgan	Thomas	no info	no info	40	Resident Master	Not Brecknock	no info
	Powell	Margaret	no info	no info	40	Resident Matron	Brecknock	no info
1851	Parry	William	no info	married	49	Master of Workhouse	Brecknock	Brecon
	Powell	Margaret	no info	unmarried	50	matron	Brecknock	Llanthetty
	Williams	William	no info	married	61	porter	Brecknock	Brecon
	Morgan	Rees	no info	unmarried	28	schoolmaster	Brecknock	Devynnock
	Griffiths	Sarah	no info	unmarried	21	schoolmistress	Brecknock	Brecon
1861	<i>Census record not available</i>							
1871	Williams	John	head	widower	55	Master of Workhouse	Brecknock	Llanfillo
	Clay	Sarah	matron	unmarried	49	matron	Brecknock	Llanfihangel fechan
	Evans	Jane	schoolmistress	unmarried	29	schoolmistress	Radnorshire	Nantmel
	Pyke	Benjamin	porter	unmarried	63	porter	Brecknock	Defynock
1881	Kettle	Henry	head	married	36	Master of Workhouse	Hereford	Kington
	Kettle	Mary	wife	married	39	Matron	Brecknockshire	St Davids
	Kettle	Henry	son	unmarried	13	scholar	Brecknockshire	no information
	Banks	Sophia	servant	married	40	nurse	Kent	Sidcup
	Banks	George	servant	married	40	house porter	Wiltshire	Laycock
	Lawrence	Rhoda	servant	unmarried	26	industrial.trainer	Monmouthshire	no information
1891	Kettle	Henry	head	married	46	Master of Workhouse	Hereford	Kington
	Kettle	Mary	wife	married	49	matron	Brecknockshire	St Davids
	Banks	George	porter	married	50	porter	Wiltshire	Lacock
	Banks	Sophia	nurse	married	50	nurse	Kent	Sidcup
	Postern	Lucie	trainer	unmarried	30	trainer	Shropshire	Cleobury Mortimer
1901	Gwillim	David	head	married	47	Master of Workhouse	Brecknockshire	Glyn
	Gwillim	Margaret	wife	married	49	matron	Brecknockshire	Glyn
	Williams	Elizabeth	servant	single	28	cook domestic	Brecknockshire	Talgarth
	Jackson	Elizabeth	servant	widow	50	infirmary nurse	London	Islington
	Griffiths	Emma	servant	single	20	industrial trainer	Glamorganshire	Swansea
	Williams	John	servant	widower	54	workhouse porter	Brecknockshire	( <i>indiscipherable</i> )
1911	Gwillim	David	head	married	57	Master of Workhouse	Brecknockshire	Glyn
	Gwillim	Margaret	wife	married	59	matron	Brecknockshire	Glyn
	Williams	Blodwen	servant	unmarried	25	general servant	Brecknockshire	Glyn
	Davies	William	porter	unmarried	38	porter/labour master	Brecknockshire	Brecon
	Davies	Florence	children's trainer	unmarried	45	children's trainer	Devon	Tavistock
	Blower	Margaret	nurse	unmarried	39	trained infirmary nurse	Ireland	Dublin
	Clector	Emily	infirmary wardmaid	unmarried	26	infirmary wardmaid	Herefordshire	Holme Lacey

Table 2 Staffing at Brecknock Union Workhouse 1841–1911



A schoolmaster/school mistress or industrial trainer was also included on the permanent staff. From 1881 a female (ward/infirmery) nurse was added to the staff return. There was limited continuity in the senior management team at Brecon workhouse. In the period 1881–1891, Henry Newman Kettle was the designated Master, Mary, his wife, was in post as matron and George and Sophia Banks were retained, respectively, as the house porter and nurse. However, the 1895 *Kelly's Directory* identifies Frank Powell as the new Master, and confirms that Lucie Postern, the Shropshire-born industrial trainer, had been replaced by Ada Grossmith.<sup>29</sup> By 1901, David Gwillim was in post as Workhouse Master and his wife, Margaret, the resident matron; however, the supporting contingent of nursing and training staff had changed. Census entries tracked by evidence from *Kelly's Directory 1906* reveal that further changes to the support staff had taken place by 1911. It is important to note that three of the six named Workhouse Masters, and all ladies recorded as wives, were Brecknockshire-born. Domestic staff, in contrast, had registered a wider set of birthplaces.

#### *Age and disability profile*

From census to census there were marked disparities in the gendered age distribution of inmates. Table 3 displays two summary measures of difference: firstly, a detailed representation of age by ten year group; and, secondly, the gendered mean age of inmates at each census. In summary, whilst one third of all the enumerated males were aged under 15, the proportion ranged from 17% (1901) to 40% (1891). This contrasts with a relatively higher proportion of female inmates aged less than 15 years which ranged from 20% (1911), on a relatively small population base, to 44% (1881). At the senior end of the age spectrum, and with the exception of 1891, the proportion of male inmates aged at least 60 (ranging from 30% (1891) to 62% (1901)) consistently exceeded that of females. The average age of inmates provides a further, but crude, measure of age disparities between genders. Whilst the mean age of males ranged from 36 years in 1841 to 53 years in 1901, the corresponding range statistics for females were 24 years in 1851 and 38 years in 1901. Moreover, with the exceptions of 1891 and 1911, the average age for male inmates consistently exceeded that of females, registering a maximum difference of 20 years in 1851.

Turnover in the inmate population accounted for the observed inter-censal differences in age and gender profiles. A total of only nine inmates (amongst the 574 cases examined) were represented in two consecutive censuses. These longer-standing inmates included Elizabeth Lewis, aged 6 years in 1841, born in the County of Brecknockshire, and listed as a Trecastle-born scholar aged 16 in 1851; Margaret Thomas, a dressmaker born in St. John's Parish,

Age group (years)	1841		1851		1861		1871	
	male	female	male	female	male	female	male	female
0-9	12	12	11	17	n/a	n/a	7	12
10-19	2	3	10	6	n/a	n/a	7	5
20-29	2	6	2	9	n/a	n/a	0	4
30-39	1	3	1	5	n/a	n/a	1	5
40-49	1	2	4	5	n/a	n/a	1	3
50-59	1	1	4	0	n/a	n/a	2	4
60-69	5	1	9	1	n/a	n/a	9	5
70-79	2	2	11	1	n/a	n/a	4	2
80-89	5	1	4	1	n/a	n/a	2	4
90-99	0	0	0	1	n/a	n/a	0	0
<b>Total inmates</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>56</b>	<b>46</b>	n/a	n/a	<b>33</b>	<b>44</b>
% pop. aged under 15yrs	45	42	32	41	n/a	n/a	33	32
% pop. aged 60yrs and over	39	13	48	9	n/a	n/a	45	25
Average age (years)	36	25	44	24	n/a	n/a	43	34
Age group (years)	1881		1891		1901		1911	
	male	female	male	female	male	female	male	female
0-9	11	12	11	6	8	7	10	4
10-19	8	10	2	5	2	7	6	6
20-29	4	5	2	1	0	2	3	3
30-39	4	4	0	2	1	2	6	2
40-49	4	5	1	3	4	1	10	1
50-59	2	3	5	2	5	1	8	1
60-69	4	3	4	7	15	2	25	2
70-79	6	1	4	0	13	2	8	3
80-89	5	2	1	2	5	3	1	3
90-99	0	0	0		0	0	0	0
<b>Total inmates</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>53</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>77</b>	<b>25</b>
				(+1 no info)				
% pop. aged under 15yrs	35	44	40	36	17	35	19	20
% pop. aged 60yrs and over	31	13	30	32	62	26	44	32
Average age (years)	37	28	37	37	53	38	46	47

Table 3 Brecknock Union Workhouse: demographic profile of inmates 1841–1911

Marital status	1841		1851		1861		1871	
	male	female	male	female	male	female	male	female
unmarried/single	n/a	n/a	42	40	n/a	n/a	26	25
married	n/a	n/a	5	3	n/a	n/a	0	2
widow/widower	n/a	n/a	9	3	n/a	n/a	7	7
<b>Total inmates</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>56</b>	<b>46</b>	n/a	n/a	<b>33</b>	<b>34</b>
Marital status	1881		1891		1901		1911	
	male	female	male	female	male	female	male	female
unmarried/single	38	37	21	20	30	20	67	15
married	5	2	0	1	5	1	4	2
widow/widower	5	6	9	8	18	6	6	8
<b>Total inmates</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>53</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>77</b>	<b>25</b>

Table 4 Brecknock Union Workhouse: marital status of inmates 1841–1911

*Brecknock Union Workhouse: a census-based profile of inmates 1841–1911*

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aged 43 in 1871 and recorded with the same (former) occupation, aged 53, in 1881; pauper Thomas Williams from Garthbrenegy, present in 1891 aged 57, and described in the next census as a 67 year-old imbecile without former employment; and the erstwhile butcher William Drinkwater from St. David's Parish, aged 66 in 1901, and described as a butcher-slaughterman, aged 77, in 1911. Even these few traces of persistent residence have to be treated with caution; it is possible, for example, that individuals had been released from the workhouse between census counts and then re-admitted.

Marriage status and disability levels varied throughout the period. Married inmates, of both sexes, rarely formed more than 10% of a census cohort. In each enumeration, however, widowers exceeded widows, and increased proportionately throughout the period from 16% in 1851 to 33% in 1901, before falling to 5% in 1911 (Table 4). Given the weighting of elderly inmates, and the vulnerability of mentally-impaired people to social pressure in Victorian society, it is unsurprising that disabilities were registered for a number of inmates.<sup>30</sup> Table 5 shows the existence of three main afflictions: mental health problems where individuals were described as either 'imbecile' (7 cases) or 'idiot' (1 case); blindness (7 cases); and deaf/dumb (2 cases).

Disability	1841		1851		1861		1871	
	male	female	male	female	male	female	male	female
deaf/dumb	n/a	n/a	0	0	n/a	n/a	0	0
blind	n/a	n/a	2	0	n/a	n/a	0	2
imbecile	n/a	n/a	0	0	n/a	n/a	1	3
idiot	n/a	n/a	1	0	n/a	n/a	0	0
epileptic	n/a	n/a	0	0	n/a	n/a	0	1
paralysed	n/a	n/a	0	0	n/a	n/a	1	0
<b>Total inmates</b>	n/a	n/a	<b>3</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>n/a</b>	<b>n/a</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>6</b>
Disability	1881		1891		1901		1911	
	male	female	male	female	male	female	male	female
deaf/dumb	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0
blind	0	1	1	1	0	0	1	1
imbecile	0	1	0	0	2	0	0	0
idiot	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
epileptic	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
paralysed	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
<b>Total inmates</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>

Table 5 Brecknock Union Workhouse: disability status of inmates 1841–1911

*Family relationships*

Six items of personal information for each inmate were examined to recreate family units amongst those listed in each census enumeration. This exercise focused on blood relationships and other indicators evidenced by: surname; age; gender; marital condition; and the parish and county of birth. With the exception of the three Irish (vagrant) families listed in 1851, there was insufficient evidence for the identification of *complete* families of inmates in the workhouse. In contrast, the 54 *incomplete* families identified can be grouped into six types: two of these, unmarried mothers with young children (24 cases) and groups of (orphaned) siblings (23 cases) predominated (Table 6). Mothers (including widows with their young offspring) (5 cases) and married couples without co-resident offspring (2 cases) accounted for the balance. Representative family situations of young mothers and orphaned siblings abstracted from the 1851 census illustrate the position. Detailed birthplace records, for instance, show that Anne Herslow, a married Brecknock pauper aged 27, had given birth to her son John (aged 4 months) at the Poor Law Union Workhouse. Likewise, Brecknock-born Anne Samuels (aged 27), an unmarried pauper formerly employed as a servant, lived in the workhouse with her scholar-daughters, Anne (aged 5) and Elizabeth (aged 3). Representative of orphaned (or placed) siblings are the scholars Jane and Elizabeth Williams aged, respectively, 7 years and 6 years and both natives of Merthyr Cynog. Notwithstanding these case histories, it becomes clear that the majority of inmates in the workhouse were solitary individuals who either lacked immediate support from, or cared for, blood relations.

<i>Category</i>	<i>1841</i>	<i>1851</i>	<i>1861</i>	<i>1871</i>	<i>1881</i>	<i>1891</i>	<i>1901</i>	<i>1911</i>
Unmarried mother and child(ren)	3	7	n/a	3	5	1	2	3
Siblings without parent(s)	1	4	n/a	3	4	3	4	4
Widow with child(ren)	0	0	n/a	0	1	1	0	1
Married woman with child(ren)	0	0	n/a	2	0	0	0	0
Man, wife and child(ren)	0	1	n/a	0	0	0	0	0
Man and wife	0	0	n/a	0	1	0	0	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>12</b>	n/a	<b>8</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>8</b>

Table 6 Brecknock Union Workhouse: family groupings 1841–1911

*Birthplace and migration history*

Birthplace evidence is available for 98% of male and 96% of female inmates. It is unfortunate, however, that census records for inmates' parishes and counties of birth tell us little about their subsequent life-course movements. An added

problem emerged in 1841: in that year, the census only required individuals to declare whether they had been born in the county in which they then lived. Higgs expands on the problem: ‘A person recorded as having been born in their place of residence may have travelled around the world between the date of their birth and census night. Such movements can sometimes be detected by the birthplaces of children. It is essential to understand that the census data merely provide a picture of the final results of migration and not a full record of the migration itself’.<sup>31</sup>

In 1841, 94% of males and 68% of females were Brecknockshire-born. Subsequent censuses provide more detail and underscore this pattern. During the period 1851–1911, 44% of males and 45% of females were natives of the county town; an additional 26% of males and 28% of females, respectively, had been born elsewhere in Brecknockshire (Table 7). A further 9% of males and 4% of females came from neighbouring counties, whilst the Irish-born and inmates originating elsewhere in England, Wales or Scotland accounted for even smaller proportions of the total.

The county-town concentration of inmates’ birthplaces contrasts starkly with those recorded at the Poor Law Union Workhouses in Builth, Crickhowell and Hay.<sup>32</sup> Throughout the study period, these accessible, but smaller, towns located in wider and more fertile river valleys close to the county boundary were characterised by lower proportions of town-born inmates and far stronger representations from neighbouring counties and more distant regions in England.

#### *Former occupation*

Records are incomplete on the former employment of adult inmates: the 1861 census has missing pages and, in 1891, the Master, Henry Kettle, erroneously substituted the word ‘pauper’ as the ‘former employment’ of all inmates (Table 8). Notwithstanding some minor omissions, from the remaining enumerations it is possible to determine the past employment of 196 men and 84 women.<sup>33</sup> These totals accounted for 84% of the males and 54% of females aged over 14 years. Whilst in 1841 six job categories were listed for males, this number had increased to 22 in 1911. Far fewer job categories were assigned to females: the total ranged from two in 1841 to six in 1881.

Table 5 allocates job descriptors to Employment Divisions within the Standard Industrial Classification (SIC).<sup>34</sup> Overall, four Employment Divisions account for the former employment of 87% of *male inmates*: agricultural employment (32%); unspecified but general labouring (28%); various sectors in manufacturing (14%); and building construction and allied trades (13%). Smaller numbers had worked in wholesale and retail trades, personal services and extractive industries. In contrast, 83% of *female inmates* had worked in various branches of domestic service. A further 8% had been engaged in agriculture, as field workers or in a domestic capacity. In addition, sewing trades and retailing had provided paid employment for a small group of inmates.

Birthplace	1841		1851		1861		1871	
	male	female	male	female	male	female	male	female
<b>Brecknockshire</b>								
Brecon town	n/a	n/a	32	33	n/a	n/a	18	24
Elsewhere in county 'Brecknockshire'	n/a	n/a	13	7	n/a	n/a	14	18
	29	22						
<b>Neighbouring counties</b>								
Glamorgan	n/a	n/a	0	0	n/a	n/a	0	0
Carmarthen	n/a	n/a	1	0	n/a	n/a	0	0
Radnor	n/a	n/a	0	0	n/a	n/a	0	0
Hereford	n/a	n/a	1	0	n/a	n/a	0	1
Monmouth	n/a	n/a	0	0	n/a	n/a	0	0
<b>Other counties in Wales</b>								
Elsewhere in England	n/a	n/a	0	0	n/a	n/a	0	0
Scotland	n/a	n/a	0	0	n/a	n/a	0	0
Ireland	0	1	9	6	n/a	n/a	1	1
Overseas	n/a	n/a	0	0	n/a	n/a	0	0
<b>Not known</b>	2	8	0	0	n/a	n/a	0	0
<b>Total for each census</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>56</b>	<b>46</b>	<b>n/a</b>	<b>n/a</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>44</b>
<b>Birthplace</b>								
	1881		1891		1901		1911	
	male	female	male	female	male	female	male	female
<b>Brecknockshire</b>								
Brecon town	18	26	9	13	18	5	36	9
Elsewhere in county	12	11	16	13	13	9	8	11
<b>Neighbouring counties</b>								
Glamorgan	0	1	0	0	2	0	1	1
Carmarthen	2	2	0	1	0	0	0	1
Radnor	1	0	0	0	5	0	3	0
Hereford	1	1	1	0	1	0	2	0
Monmouth	1	0	0	0	3	1	3	0
<b>Other counties in Wales</b>								
Elsewhere in England	1	0	1	1	3	0	6	2
Scotland	6	3	2	0	7	3	12	1
Ireland	0	0	0	0	1	1	3	0
Overseas	2	0	0	0	0	0	2	0
<b>Not known</b>	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
<b>Total for census</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>54</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>76</b>	<b>25</b>

Table 7 Brecknock Union Workhouse: counties of birth for inmates 1841–1911

*Brecknock Union Workhouse: a census-based profile of inmates 1841–1911*

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SIC Division	1841		1851		1861		1871	
	male	female	male	female	male	female	male	female
<i>Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing</i>	14	0	14	7	n/a	n/a	2	0
<i>Mining and Quarrying</i>	0	0	0	0	n/a	n/a	0	0
<i>Manufacturing</i>	3	0	2	0	n/a	n/a	3	1
<i>Electricity, gas and water</i>	0	0	0	0	n/a	n/a	0	0
<i>Construction and building</i>	0	0	6	0	n/a	n/a	1	0
<i>Wholesale and retail trades, restaurants and hotels</i>	1	0	0	0	n/a	n/a	1	2
<i>Transport and communications</i>	0	0	0	0	n/a	n/a	0	0
<i>Finance and business services</i>	0	0	1	0	n/a	n/a	1	0
<i>Community and personal services</i>	0	16	1	10	n/a	n/a	0	22
<i>Miscellaneous (exclusively general labourers)</i>	0	0	7	0	n/a	n/a	9	0
<b>Inmates assigned occupations [A]</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>n/a</b>	<b>n/a</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>25</b>
<b>[A] as a % of those aged 15 or above</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>94</b>	<b>97</b>	<b>62</b>	<b>n/a</b>	<b>n/a</b>	<b>77</b>	<b>83</b>

SIC Division	1881		1891		1901		1911	
	male	female	male	female	male	female	male	female
<i>Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing</i>	7	0	n/a	n/a	9	0	17	0
<i>Mining and Quarrying</i>	1	0	n/a	n/a	1	0	0	0
<i>Manufacturing</i>	8	3	n/a	n/a	5	0	7	1
<i>Electricity, gas and water</i>	0	0	n/a	n/a	0	0	0	0
<i>Construction and building</i>	4	0	n/a	n/a	6	0	9	0
<i>Wholesale and retail trades, restaurants and hotels</i>	2	0	n/a	n/a	2	0	6	0
<i>Transport and communications</i>	2	0	n/a	n/a	0	0	1	0
<i>Finance and business services</i>	0	0	n/a	n/a	0	0	1	0
<i>Community and personal services</i>	1	12	n/a	n/a	2	3	0	7
<i>Miscellaneous (exclusively general labourers)</i>	4	0	n/a	n/a	19	0	16	0
<b>Inmates assigned occupations [A]</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>n/a</b>	<b>n/a</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>57</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>[A] as a % of those aged 15 or above</b>	<b>94</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>n/a</b>	<b>n/a</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>92</b>	<b>40</b>

(i) In 1871 the total for general labourers includes 7 males classed as 'navvy'  
(ii) In 1881 7 males described as beggars were excluded from the totals.  
(iii) In 1911 14 male vagrants ascribed former occupations were included in the total.

Table 8 Brecknock Union Workhouse: former employment of inmates 1841–1911

### **Reflections on inmate identity and social segregation from county-town society**

From the perspective of the community historian, it is interesting to speculate as to whether a cohesive inmate community existed in the Brecknock Union workhouse.<sup>35</sup> This line of enquiry raises two interesting challenges: firstly, defining the concept and dimensions of 'community' in its historical context;<sup>36</sup> and, secondly, reviewing the evidence to establish an inmate's sense of belonging and experience of group identity.<sup>37</sup> Social scientists have debated at length the meaning of 'community'.<sup>38</sup> The present investigation is framed within Day's working definition: '*A community is a place, or setting, displaying certain social characteristics that can be identified and described, but community is also something that is felt, and which has an emotional or affective impact*'.<sup>39</sup> Two measures of affective community, 'persistence' and 'social bonding', informed this line of enquiry.<sup>40</sup>

Regular turnover in the population of inmates would have stifled the development of strong community bonds. This fluid situation arose from demographic processes and administrative procedures. 'Persistence' was reduced by the natural death rate for senior inmates and the policy adopted for the work-placement of orphaned youngsters in their teens away from the institution.<sup>41</sup> These age-related processes would have minimised the prospect of longstanding personal relationships and impacted the level of community cohesion. In contrast, there is circumstantial evidence that suggests the presence of social bonds amongst inmates in the workhouse environment.<sup>42</sup> Whilst some inmates from the market town and hinterland villages would have been acquainted prior to admission, the disciplined workhouse routine (including a daily work schedule) and wearing of distinctive uniforms were further hallmarks of a corporate existence. Competence in the Welsh language enriched the basis for group identity; in 1901, for instance, 57% of the males and 59% of females in the institution were bilingual, whilst the corresponding proportions for town people were, respectively, 19% and 21%.<sup>43</sup> External pressures that reinforced social exclusion also nurtured a sense of inmate identity and solidarity. These included the physical isolation of the workhouse set in its own grounds at the edge of the town;<sup>44</sup> and the stigma that townsfolk attached to institutional life as manifested in the visible culture of dependency.<sup>45</sup>

### **Conclusion**

Census analysis has provided an informative glimpse of the social characteristics of inmates in Brecknock Union Workhouse 1841–1911. Regrettably, it tells us nothing about the family circumstances of these inmates, and the events leading to their admission,<sup>46</sup> the duration of stay (especially in the cases of locally-born unmarried mothers and younger persons), education of children



(other than incomplete designations a ‘scholar’) or the subtle ways in which inmates were excluded from market town society

Such an enquiry lies beyond the application and range of techniques in oral history. Equally as perplexing is the finding that the surviving Minutes of the Meetings of Poor Law Guardians remain largely silent on the harrowing dimensions of personal tragedy and trauma experienced by those forced to rely on modest state provision for shelter and sustenance. We now know, however, from the seven (surviving) census snapshots that: Brecknock Union Workhouse provided a refuge for transient vagrants; sheltered and educated appreciable numbers of young and orphaned children; accommodated cohorts of seniors from local backgrounds in unskilled work; cared for small groups of vulnerable people suffering disabilities; and housed disproportionate numbers of (elderly) widowers who seemingly lacked wider networks of family support.

#### Notes

<sup>1</sup> May, T. *The Victorian workhouse*. Oxford (2002); Higginbotham, P. *Life in a Victorian workhouse*. Stroud (2011).

<sup>2</sup> These studies extend in geographical scale from individual workhouses to county-level provision. See, for illustration, Hall, R. ‘The vanishing unemployed, hidden disabled and embezzling master: researching Coventry Workhouse Registers’, *The Local Historian*, Vol. 38, (2008), pp. 111–121; Gritt, A. and Park, P. ‘The workhouse populations of Lancashire in 1881’, *Local Population Studies*, Vol. 86, (2011), pp. 37–65; Goose, N. (1999) ‘Workhouse populations in the mid-nineteenth century; the case of Hertfordshire’, *Local Population Studies*, Vol. 62, (1999), pp. 52–79.

<sup>3</sup> Whilst some studies have focused on evidence from a single census, others have provided a time-comparison. See, for illustration, Hinde, A. and Turnbull, F. ‘The populations of two east Hampshire workhouses 1851–1861’, *Local Population Studies*, Vol. 61, (1998), pp. 38–53; Seal, C. (2010) ‘Workhouse populations in the Cheltenham and Belper Unions, 1851–1911’, *Family and Community History*, Vol. 13, (2010), pp. 83–100.

<sup>4</sup> Throughout this study, the following standardised terms are employed: ‘Brecknockshire’ to describe the administrative county in the nineteenth century; ‘Brecknock Union’ with reference to the Poor Law Union; and ‘Brecknock’ for the county town.

<sup>5</sup> This style of personalised writing about issues in rural Britain is explored by Cloke, P. and Thrift, N. ‘Introduction: re-figuring the rural’, in Cloke, P., Doel, M., Matless, D. and Phillips, M. *Writing the rural*. London (1994), pp. 1–7.

<sup>6</sup> Relatively few records for Brecknock Union Workhouse are catalogued at the Powys County Record Office. Items consulted include: Minute Books of the Assessment Committee 1862–1880; and Parochial Ledgers 1881–1886 (B/G/BR168/1/2) However, the *Powys County Record Office Digital History Project* includes a report from the *Brecon and Radnor Express* newspaper, dated 2<sup>nd</sup> January 1891, describing Christmas festivities at the Union Workhouse. The next edition, dated 9<sup>th</sup> January, recounts a charity-sponsored afternoon of social entertainment comprising a magic lantern show and musical interlude, finishing with tea and the distribution of gifts appropriate to the age and gender of inmates (tobacco for men, tea and sugar for women, and toys for children).

<sup>7</sup> Measurement of the role of market towns and their hinterland relationships are examined by Pryce, W. T. R. ‘Town and country relationships’, in The Open University *Historical sources and the social scientist*. Milton Keynes (1983), pp. 5–74.

<sup>8</sup> A succinct summary of landmark changes in English Poor Law legislation is provided in Friar, S. *The Sutton companion to local history*. Stroud (2001), pp. 324–325.

<sup>9</sup> Levitt, I. 'Poor law and pauperism', in Langton, J. and Morris, R. J. (eds) *Atlas of Industrialising Britain 1780–1914*. London (1986), p. 160.

<sup>10</sup> Boyer, G. R and Schmidle, T. P. 'Poverty among the elderly in late Victorian England', *Economic History Review*, Vol. 62, (2009), pp. 249–278, demonstrate a north-south divide in the role of the workhouse as a deterrent to pauperism.

<sup>11</sup> Hankin, F. 'From parish pauper to Union workhouse inmate (part 2)', *Brycheiniog*, Vol. XXXI, (1998–1999), pp. 65–108.

<sup>12</sup> Core economic and administrative functions performed by Brecon in the Victorian period have been examined using trade directories and topographical accounts in Gant, R. 'The townscape and economy of Brecon 1800–1860', *Brycheiniog*, Vol. XVI, (1972), pp. 103–124; and Gant, R. 'Brecon in 1901: a census perspective on the county town', *Brycheiniog* Vol. XLII, (2011), pp. 43–70.

<sup>13</sup> Lipman, V. D *Local Government Areas 1834–1945*. Oxford (1949), p. 45.

<sup>14</sup> Carter, H. *The towns of Wales. A study in urban geography*. Cardiff (1966), pp. 51–54.

<sup>15</sup> Parishes comprising Brecknock Poor Law Union are specified in: P. Higginbotham [www.workhouses.org.uk/Brecon](http://www.workhouses.org.uk/Brecon) [accessed 24<sup>th</sup> January, 2013].

<sup>16</sup> *Kelly's Directory of Monmouthshire and South Wales, 1895 (Part 1 Monmouthshire Directory & South Wales Localities)*, 91, cites a capacity of 150 inmates at the workhouse in Hay-on-Wye.

<sup>17</sup> With regard to its location, Williams, H. *Bulwark and Bridge*. Mountain Ash (1984), pp. 46–47, comments that "... the Union Workhouse was sufficiently far removed from the town centre so as to appease the fragile sensibilities of the middle classes". The 1:2500 Ordnance Survey Plan (Edition 1904) presented as Figure 1 confirms the 'hollow-square' footprint of the Brecknock Union Workhouse.

<sup>18</sup> Williams, M. *Crickhowell Union workhouse: the spike*. Crickhowell and District Archive Centre (2000).

<sup>19</sup> Higgs, E. *Making sense of the census. The manuscript returns for England and Wales 1801–1901*. London (2005).

<sup>20</sup> The following census records for Brecknock were examined: Sunday, 6<sup>th</sup> June, 1841 (HO107/1371); Sunday, 30<sup>th</sup> March, 1851 (HO107/2489); Sunday, 7<sup>th</sup> April, 1861 (RG9/4211); Sunday, 2<sup>nd</sup> April, 1871 (RG10/5579); Sunday, 3<sup>rd</sup> April, 1881 (transcript – see footnote 15); Sunday, 5<sup>th</sup> April, 1891 (RG12/4570); Sunday, 31<sup>st</sup> March, 1901 (RG13/5168); and Sunday, 2<sup>nd</sup> April, 1911 (RG/78 collated in *Ancestrylib.com*).

<sup>21</sup> The evolution of 'disability history' as a quantitative field in community studies is explained by Jones, C. 'Disability in Herefordshire 1851–1911', *Local Population Studies*, Vol. 67, (2011), pp. 29–44. For an illustration from Wales, see Benjamin, E. A. 'Human afflictions: a study of the north Cardigan census returns 1851–71', *Ceredigion*, Vol. 10, (1985), pp. 55–160.

<sup>22</sup> From 1901, designated enumerators in public institutions were given printed sets of guidance notes (with examples) to assist in the satisfactory completion of the census schedule. Each Workhouse Master responsible for fewer than three hundred inmates was paid a fixed fee of ten shillings for completing this census record.

<sup>23</sup> Original census pages for Brecknockshire, 1841–1871 and 1891–1901 were viewed on CD ROM produced by S & N British Data Archive Ltd. For 1911, census records were viewed online at *Ancestrylibrary.com*, *Wales Census 1911, Brecknockshire, St. David's Without Parish*.

<sup>24</sup> Census transcripts for residents in the workhouses of England and Wales in 1881 are reproduced in P. Higginbotham [www.workhouses.org.uk](http://www.workhouses.org.uk) [accessed 26<sup>th</sup> January, 2014].

<sup>25</sup> Until 1891, the Masters at Brecknock Union Workhouse had used the term 'pauper'. In 1901 Master David Gwillim broke with that convention and listed his charges as 'inmates'.

<sup>26</sup> Sporadic counts on the number of paupers accommodated at Brecknock Workhouse are reported in Hankin, F. *op. cit.*, (1998–1999), p. 105; and Poole, E. *The illustrated history and biography of Brecknockshire*. Brecon (1886), pp. 455–456. These statistics fit the general trends evidenced from census enumeration and suggest the cyclical impact of unemployment, together with other factors, on the ratio between indoor and outdoor paupers, and related costs of provision.

<sup>27</sup> “. . . added pressure for a new workhouse . . . had been created by the increasing number of vagrant poor passing through the town en route to the industrial valleys of South Wales, and by destitute Irish fleeing from famine in Ireland following the potato blight of the 1840s”. Thomas, W. S. K. *Georgian and Victorian Brecon*. Llandyssul (1993), pp. 58–59.

<sup>28</sup> Under the heading *Poor Law Union*, several trade directories in the nineteenth century listed non-residential officials associated with the Brecknock Union. *Slater’s Royal and National Trade Directory 1852–1853*, for instance, specifies the following officers of the Brecknock Poor Law Union: The Governor, William Parry; Clerk to the Board of Guardians, John Davies of Wheat Street; Surgeon, Thomas Armstrong; Chaplain, Rev. Rees Pryce; and outdoor relieving officers Richard Thomas, John Powell and Richard Morgan. From a financial perspective, Williams, H. *Bulwark and Bridge*. Mountain Ash (1984), pp. 46–48, discusses the cost issues attached to the provision of ‘outdoor’ medical care to paupers in the Brecknock Union.

<sup>29</sup> *Kelly’s Directory for South Wales and Monmouthshire, 1895*, p.91; p. 337. Ada Grossmith, in turn, had been replaced by Miss C. C. Wickes in 1906. *Kelly’s Directory for South Wales and Monmouthshire, 1906*, p. 102.

<sup>30</sup> Higgs, *op. cit.*, (2005), p. 91, notes that “When ‘feeble-minded’ was substituted for ‘idiot’ in 1901, the number of persons recorded as having a mental disability rose markedly”.

<sup>31</sup> Higgs, *op. cit.*, (2005), p. 91. This issue is further examined by Pryce, W. T. R. ‘A migration typology and some topics for the research agenda’, *Family and Community History*, Vol. 3, (2000), pp. 65–80.

<sup>32</sup> This conclusion is based on a preliminary analysis of the census data for these three workhouses using the research design developed for the demographic study of Brecknock Union Workhouse.

<sup>33</sup> Under-reporting of women’s work remains a problem in nineteenth century community studies. Notwithstanding, Higgs (2005, p. 103) concludes that: “. . . in the absence of alternative sources, the census enumerators’ books are still the best source for understanding the economic activities of women in the Victorian period”.

<sup>34</sup> For guidance and further explanation on the basis of industrial classification, see ISIC-Rev 2 (1968) *International Standard Industrial Classification of all Economic Activities*. <http://laborsta.ilo.org/applv8/data/isc2e.html>.

<sup>35</sup> The relationship between place and sense of identity is explored in Rose, G. ‘Place and identity: a sense of place’, in Massey, D. and Jess, P. *A Place in the World?* Oxford (1995), pp. 87–106.

<sup>36</sup> From an historical perspective, issues connected with the definition and meaning of community are examined in Finnegan, R. ‘Community: what it is and how we can investigate it?’ in Pryce, W. T. R. *From family history to community history* Cambridge (1994), pp. 209–214.

<sup>37</sup> Operational practices for extracting community characteristics from historical records are outlined by Dennis, R. and Daniels, S. ‘Community and the social geography of Victorian cities’ in Drake, M. (ed) *Time, family and community. perspectives on family and community history*. Oxford (1994), pp. 210–224. For further guidance, see Macfarlane, A. *Reconstructing historical communities*. Cambridge (1977), p. 24.

<sup>38</sup> For an informative review of the concept of ‘community’, see Bell, C. and Newby, H. *The sociology of community*. London (1974), pp. xlvii–li; and Stacey, M. ‘The myth of community studies’, *British Journal of Sociology*, Vol. 20, (1969), pp. 134–147.

<sup>39</sup> Approaches taken to community study are examined by Day, G. *Community and everyday life*. Abingdon (2006), pp. 26–27.

<sup>40</sup> Mills, D. “Defining community: a critical review of ‘community’ in family and community history”, *Family and Community History*, Vol. 7, (2004), pp. 5–12, pleads with authors of micro-scale community histories to state explicitly how they use the term ‘community’.

<sup>41</sup> ‘Persistence’ is a critical concept for the interpretation of community stability. See, for a detailed explanation, French, C. ‘Who lived in suburbia? Surbiton in the second half of the nineteenth century’, *Family and Community History*, Vol. 7, (2007), pp. 93–109; and Gant, R. ‘Railway villages in

south east Monmouthshire 1850–1965: a community perspective’, *Local Population Studies*, Vol. 90, (2013), pp. 49–73.

<sup>42</sup> No doubt there were occasions when social tensions existed amongst the inmate population. “Community historians should remain reflective about their use of the term ‘community’, guarding against its implied cosy and harmonious social relations”. Deacon, B. and Donald, M. ‘In search of community history,’ *Family and Community History*, Vol. 7, (2004), p. 17.

<sup>43</sup> See Gant, R. *op. cit.*, (2011), pp. 57–59.

<sup>44</sup> From a theoretical viewpoint, Sibley, D. *Geographies of exclusion*. London (1995), pp. 83–85, discusses the relationship between the social exclusion and the spatial segregation of disadvantaged groups in nineteenth urban society, and their rule-bound control in separate buildings such as workhouses and asylums. These issues are further exemplified in the essays included in Smith, C. J. and Giggs, J. A. *Location and Stigma*, London (1988). See footnote (17) for a local exemplification of this claim.

<sup>45</sup> During the Summer holidays in my childhood, two elderly great-aunts living in The Watton would take my sister and me on nature walks through the lanes in Cantref, passing *en route* the Union Workhouse. These two native-born Breconians needed little prompting to share (prejudiced) recollections on differences between the ‘respectable’ people in the town and workhouse inmates, and the austere life style they endured.

<sup>46</sup> One revealing example of an admission to the Union Workhouse is recorded in the notebook of Dr Lucas, Medical Superintendent, during the serious cholera epidemic centred on the Bailyglas/Mill Street district of Brecon in 1854. Early in November, William Davies from Telybrethos Farm in Cantref had brought his labourer, Morgan, suffering from the advanced symptoms of cholera to the workhouse. Dr Lucas was relieved to note the unfortunate Morgan had previously slept for three nights at an address in Mill Street, the epicentre of the outbreak at that time, and that his case did not signal a fresh and geographically distinctive outbreak of the disease away from the existing core. *Notebook of Dr Lucas, entry for 6<sup>th</sup> November, 1854. Powys County Record Office. Lucas/A7/1/2.*

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## A CRICKHOWELL CRUSADER: THE CASE OF THE MISSING HANDS

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In the chancel of St Edmund's Church in Crickhowell there are two effigies, said to be those of Sir Grimbald Pauncefote (sometimes spelt Pauncefoot) and his wife Lady Sybil, daughter and heiress of Hugh de Turberville.

Sir Grimbald's effigy, much worn, is of a figure in chainmail bearing the Pauncefote arms—three lions rampant. It seems to have been originally cross-legged and is so described and illustrated in Theophilus Jones's *History of Brecknock*:

Under a low arch in the south wall of the chancel is a mutilated figure of a knight (formerly cross legged) in complete mail armour recumbent upon an altar monument of stone. By the arms on the shield, the person interred and here commemorated was a Pauncefote or Pauncefoot. Upon the front margin or edge of the tablet on which the figure rests, is an inscription not legible. From the cross legs of figures of this kind many writers and some antiquaries were in the habit of concluding that these were monuments of knights Templars or at least of crusaders . . . (but) we are not from



Fig. 1 Effigy of Sir Grimbald in St Edmund's church from Theophilus Jones.

hence to infer that the knight was ever actually at Jerusalem, but merely to consider it as the fashion of the day. Opposite to this figure, under a similar arch in the north wall, is another of a female, probably the wife of the former, habited in the costume of the time. The entrances into both graves were evidently on the outside of the building, where the openings appear to have been walled up with hewn stones very closely jointed.<sup>1</sup>

Jones is quite right in stating that a cross-legged effigy does not necessarily signify participation in a crusade and the evidence regarding Grimbald's involvement in the crusades will be discussed later.

Lady Sybil's effigy has no hands and the story is that she sacrificed at least one of them (the right) as ransom for her husband who had been captured on crusade. In fact, three Pauncefote wives are said to have made this sacrifice for their crusading husbands.

The source of the legend is quoted in the St Edmund's Church guidebook<sup>2</sup> as the *Ballad of the Fair Ladye* (also referred to as *Lovinge Ladye*) but no further detail is given and it has not so far been possible to track down the original text. The author, Rev. Cyril James, however, states that the *Ballad* of some 35 verses describes how, when asked what ransom he could pay, Sir Grimbald replied 'I have no lands or gold, but I have a wife who would give her right hand for me'. James adds 'A palmer (pilgrim) was sent to Lady Sibyl and she agreed.'



Fig. 2 Effigy of Lady Sybil from St Edmund's church.

Photo courtesy of Hywel Bevan

It is a good story but does it have any substance?

What is known and substantiated by the sources is that Grimbald Pauncefote, Lord of the manor of Hasfield, 7 miles north of Gloucester and son of Richard and Isabel Pauncefote, married Lady Sybil de Turberville, daughter of Hugh de Turberville and therefore a member of one of the important marcher dynasties, sometime in the late 1260s. They were jointly enfeoffed with the manor of Crickhowell as part of the marriage settlement. By this time, after the upheavals and changing allegiances of the Barons' War, Grimbald was reconciled with King Henry III and is recorded as receiving various grants of lands and privileges such as forestry and fishing rights in the 1260s, 1270s and 1280s.<sup>3</sup> Grimbald and Sybil had two sons – another Grimbald and Emeric – and the former succeeded his father when he died in 1287. Lady Sybil endowed the church of St Edmund's in Crickhowell after Grimbald's death.

The Pauncefotes also held lands at Much Cowarne, in Herefordshire and in the church there, there is also a much-damaged effigy of a Sir Grimbald who is said to have married Constance, daughter of John de Lingen, in 1253. Her effigy no longer survives, having been destroyed either during the Civil War or when the church was struck by lightning in 1840. It was, however, described by Silas Taylor, a visitor to the church in the mid seventeenth century:



Fig. 3 Effigy of Sir Grimbald in Much Cowarne church.

Photo by author

The female (figure) laid next the wall of the south aisle, on her right side, by which means his left side might be contiguous to her right, the better to answer the figure; also the stump of the woman's arm is somewhat elevated, as if to attract notice; and the hand and wrist, cut off, are carved close to his left side, with the right hand on his armour, as if for note.<sup>4</sup>

And the story of Grimbald and Constance is told in a framed (modern) illuminated manuscript, which was donated to the church in the 1980s by the descendants of her brother Sir John de Lingen.

The devoted Constance apparently sent a message by pigeon to the monks of Gloucester, known for their medical skills, asking for a surgeon to amputate her hand as a ransom for her husband who had been captured at the siege of Tunis. The hand was then preserved in salt and wine and shipped to Tunis to obtain Grimbald's release.<sup>5</sup> Again, however, the exact sourcing for this is difficult to track down and no mention is made of the parallel story of Lady Sybil.

The longevity of the story of Constance's sacrifice is illustrated by a poem entitled 'Sir Grimbald's Ransom' by the popular American children's author Mary Emily Bradley, which appeared in the children's magazine *Wide Awake* in February 1891 and subsequently a collection entitled *Famous Stories and Poems*, published in Boston in 1893. It tells the story of Sir Grimbald's departure on crusade; Constance's anxious wait for his return; the news of the ransom demand and her immediate compliance. The following stanzas give a sense of the literary style and content:

In Saracen stronghold they held him (Grimbald) instead  
 Till the Saracen chief set a price on his head  
 And the ransom, ah me! that he chose to demand  
 Was not silver or gold-but a little white hand  
 . . . Ah, woe for Sir Grimbald! In anguish he cried,  
 "Would God thou hadst slain me! Would God I had died!"  
 But messengers marched over land, over sea,  
 To bear Lady Constance the cruel decree  
 . . . Oh, wan were her cheeks, and her eyes wild with fear,  
 When the bugle-call rang and the envoy drew near;  
 But the rose bloomed again when the errand was said,  
 And she knew that her hand was the price for his head.

In the final stanza, Bradley declares that the tale was confirmed years later when the crypt wherein Constance was buried was opened and her skeleton was found to be missing a right hand. She adds, in a footnote, that the story was substantiated by family documents in the possession of Sir Julian Pauncefote. The latter, who became the first Baron Pauncefote, was appointed Envoy Extraordinary and Minister Plenipotentiary to the United States in 1889 and



then Ambassador in 1893. His arrival in America was no doubt the inspiration for Mary Bradley's poem but it seems to have been a strong and accepted family tradition and appeared in Lord Pauncefote's obituary in the *New York Times* of 25 May 1902.

To confuse matters further, there is a third handless wife, Dorothy Pauncefote nee Ashfield/Ashley from Hasfield, who, when betrothed to Richard Pauncefote, is said to have sent her hand to secure his release from captivity with the Barbary pirates. Dorothy died in 1568 and Richard in 1559. Their story is apparently told in the Ballad of Hasfield, which again seems elusive. The guidebook to Hasfield parish church, however, suggests that the story more likely refers to Constance. It notes that some have suggested that her tomb was swept away in a nineteenth century restoration, although there is no actual record of this. Again perhaps there is confusion with Much Cowarne.<sup>6</sup>

There are a number of problems with these various stories. The first involves what are apparently duplicate Sir Grimbalds but perhaps Constance de Lingen was Sir Grimbald's first wife and Grimbald had effigies at both Crickhowell and Much Cowarne. Since, however, Grimbald is known to have married Lady Sybil in the late 1260s, Constance must have died well before the siege of Tunis in 1270/1.

Secondly, there is no evidence that Sir Grimbald actually went on crusade. Robert de Turberville and a number of knights and lords from the Welsh Marches did accompany Lord Edmund, brother of the Lord Edward, later Edward I, on the Tunis Crusade in 1271,<sup>7</sup> but the most recent study of Wales and the Crusades by Kathryn Hurlock lists Grimbald's participation as uncertain.<sup>8</sup>

The documentary evidence is certainly unclear. Edward arrived in Tunis in November 1270, after the death of King Louis IX of France (August 1270); then sailed to Acre the following spring and, having agreed an eleven year truce with the Mamluk Sultan Baybars, departed for Sicily in September 1272.<sup>9</sup> Edmund left England a bit later, arrived in Acre in September 1271 and set sail for England the following May.

During this time, Grimbald seems to have been busy with duties in his local area. For example, in December 1270, he is recorded as collector in Gloucester of the tax of a twentieth (on goods and possessions) granted for the crusade<sup>10</sup> and he seems to have been active in England again in late July 1272.<sup>11</sup> There is, however, a curious reference in July 1271 to Grimbald's property being given royal protection for 3 years, suggesting that he was planning to be absent from the country for some time and the records appear to be silent on his activities for a time after July 1272.<sup>12</sup>

So, if there is at least a small possibility that Grimbald travelled to the East, what of the supposed amputation? Yvonne Friedman has written in detail about

ransom practice in the Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem<sup>13</sup> and, whilst wives sometimes became hostages for their husband's release and women were of course sometimes captives themselves, there is no suggestion that payments took the form of severed limbs.

The story also does not accord with crusade medical practice.<sup>14</sup> When knights died on crusade their bones might be returned home but soft tissue was buried and one can only imagine the state of a hand, however well pickled, after the long journey from the Welsh borders to Tunis.

There is also the issue of the ladies themselves. It is not clear when Constance died but we do have a chronology for Lady Sybil. Not long after Grimbald's death in 1287, she married Llewelyn, the second son of Gruffudd ap Gwenwynwyn, lord of Powys.<sup>15</sup> Llewelyn died in 1294, but Sybil continued to hold her substantial lands in Powys until her death in 1326 and there is no mention of her absence of hands.

The origins of the Constance and Much Cowarne story therefore remain a puzzle but the explanation for the handless effigy in Crickhowell may be rather more prosaic, namely damage over the intervening centuries. A visitor to Crickhowell, who described himself as "An Architect", wrote in the *Gentleman's Magazine* in 1802:

On each side of the chancel . . . I perceived, under arched recesses, statues of a lady on the North, and a knight on the South side; but they were covered with all kinds of rubbish, and it was not until the sexton had cleared out the recesses that I could have a proper view of them; and before I was enabled to pass any opinion on their merits, I was obliged to reinstate the mutilated parts, by fixing on the lady's head and putting together the several extremities of the knight. How I was grieved and charmed at the same time, in witnessing such neglect and havoc; such elegance and grace.<sup>16</sup>

In short, it is a good story with the tale of the handless Constance most frequently recorded in Pauncefote family history and genealogies and even crossing the Atlantic. And it may be that, sometime in the Middle Ages or later, the Constance legend was transferred to two other Pauncefote ladies. Fortunately, however, these examples of wifely devotion are unlikely to have happened in practice.

Nevertheless, it is perhaps fitting that set above Sir Grimbald's effigy in Crickhowell there are several tiles from Jerusalem, which were presented to St Edmund's Church by Harry Pirie-Gordon, whose family home was Gwernvale, now the Manor Hotel. Pirie-Gordon had a lifelong interest in the crusades, travelled in Syria in 1908, knew T. E. Lawrence<sup>17</sup> and was a member of a pilgrimage to Jerusalem organized by the Order of St John in 1926.<sup>18</sup> Pirie-Gordon and his one time friend, the exotic Frederick J. Rolfe, Baron Corvo, also collaborated on a book, *Hubert's Arthur*, set against the background of the crusades.<sup>19</sup>



Fig. 3 Effigy of Sir Grimbald in St Edmund's church. Photo courtesy of Hywel Bevan

### Notes

<sup>1</sup> T. Jones, *History of the County of Brecknock*, Glanusk edition (Brecknock 1911), vol. iii, p. 120, and fig. 2 opp. p. 111.

<sup>2</sup> Rev. C. G. James, *The Story of St Edmund's Church*. (3<sup>rd</sup> edition, 1995).

<sup>3</sup> C. Moor, *Knights of Edward I*, iv, Harleian Society (Leeds, 1929–32), pp. 10–11.

<sup>4</sup> J. Duncumb, *Collections towards the history and antiquities of the County of Hereford*, vol. I, pt. 1 (repr. Merton, 1996), pp. 98–9.

<sup>5</sup> Guidebook to the parish church of Much Cowarne, 2008.

<sup>6</sup> Guidebook to the parish church of St Mary Hasfield, 2007.

<sup>7</sup> S. Lloyd, 'The Lord Edward's Crusade 1270: Its setting and significance', in J. Gillingham and J. C. Holt (eds.), *War and Government in the Middle Ages: Essays in Honour of J. O. Prestwich* (Woodbridge, 1984), pp. 129–30.

<sup>8</sup> K. Hurlock, *Wales and the Crusades c 1095–1291*, (Cardiff, 2011), p. 232. The picture is further confused by the inclusion of Grimbald in two nineteenth century lists of crusaders but under the Third Crusade—J. C. Dansey, *The English Crusaders* (London, 1850); J. H. Wiffen, *Jerusalem Delivered*, (1828).

<sup>9</sup> For Edward's crusade, now see S. Cockerill, *Eleanor of Castile The Shadow Queen* (Stroud, 2014), pp. 160–80.

<sup>10</sup> See Moor, *Knights of Edward I*, iv, pp. 10–11.

<sup>11</sup> *Excerpta e Rotulis Finium in Turri Londinensi asservatis*, 1216–72, ed. C. Roberts, 2 vols (London, 1835–6), vol. ii, pp. 574–5.

<sup>12</sup> *Calendar of the Patent Rolls Preserved in the Public Record Office, 1232–1307*, 8 vols (London, 1898–1908), Henry III, vi, p. 549. I am grateful to Dr. David Stephenson for these references.

<sup>13</sup> Y. Friedman, *Encounter between Enemies. Captivity and Ransom in the Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem* (Leiden 2002).

<sup>14</sup> P. D. Mitchell, *Medicine in the Crusades, Warfare, Wounds and the Medieval Surgeon* (Cambridge, 2004), pp. 24–5, 141.

<sup>15</sup> Again I am grateful to Dr David Stephenson for this reference. See now E. Cavell, ‘Welsh Princes, English Wives: The Politics of Powys Wenwynwyn revisited’, *Welsh History Review*, xxvii (2) (2014), pp. 244, 247.

<sup>16</sup> Pursuits of Architectural Innovation’, *Gentleman’s Magazine*, xlv (1802), p. 23.

<sup>17</sup> Obituary of Pirie-Gordon – *Geographical Journal*, cxxxvi (1970), p. 170.

<sup>18</sup> E. J. King, *The Pilgrimage of 1926. Being the Official Journal of the Knights of St John* (London, 1926).

<sup>19</sup> *Hubert’s Arthur* published in 1935. For more on Pirie-Gordon and Rolfe, see E. Raven and C. Stewart, *An Elusive tradition: Art and Society in Wales 1870–1956* (Cardiff, 2001), pp. 42–60 and M. J. Benkovitz, *Frederick Rolfe: Baron Corvo* (London, 1977), pp. 189–204.

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## THE TALGARTH BRITISH SCHOOL AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF A SYSTEM OF EDUCATION

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### **Introduction**

One of the defining features of the nineteenth Century in Britain was the development of primary school education and in Wales it was marked by the rivalry between National (or Church) Schools and the British (or Nonconformist) Schools. In this paper I trace the history of the Talgarth British School from its beginnings in these competitive times through its days as a board school and into the twentieth century and the era of the Local Education Authority. From the school log books, which began in 1862, fascinating insights emerge of the challenges encountered in trying to create a system of education that was appreciated by some, but not by all. However, despite the obstacles, a school was created at Talgarth that continues to serve its local community to the present day.

A wider geographical context for this study is provided by the section on education in Breconshire in 'Atlas Brycheiniog' which was produced in both English and Welsh by the Breconshire Education Committee in 1960.<sup>1</sup>

### **Background to the increase in primary education**

The National Society was founded in 1811, with the very ambitious aim of providing every parish in England and Wales with a school in which to educate the poor in the principles of the Established Church.<sup>2</sup> By 1833, there were 146 National Schools in Wales, educating more than 13,000 pupils.

But much of Wales was Nonconformist in religion, and Nonconformists objected to sending their children to the National Schools. So, a second 'Voluntary Society', the British and Foreign Schools Society, was founded in London in 1814, to cater for their needs.

Its [the British Society] basic principles were that instruction should be available to the whole community, and the teaching of dogma or formulary of any religious sect should be excluded from schools.<sup>3</sup>

Initially, the British Society made slow progress in Wales. This was due to a lack of funds, a lack of agents to stimulate interest, and a lack of administrative machinery to rival the National Society's parochial and diocesan organisation.

### **The primary schools of Talgarth and neighbouring areas**

Written evidence of education before the nineteenth century in the local area is scarce. A brief entry in G. L. Fairs' book on Hay simply states that a school

was transferred from Talgarth to Hay.<sup>4</sup> No details are given. However, in neighbouring Hay, in 1670, there was a school endowed by William Pennoyer.<sup>5</sup> This was a Charity School and seems to have been housed in a one-storey building, located in the Market Square at Hay. This school must have been associated with the Church, but the growing influence of Nonconformity in this area of Breconshire, is reflected in the fact that, in 1813, E. Goff endowed another school in Hay with an Independent minister as master. This school was housed in the Baptist Chapel at Bell Bank in Hay.

There was a quick response to the creation of the National Society. In 1816, nearby Glasbury Parochial School started; it was 'in union' with the National Society. In 1825 a National School was established in Hay. By 1846, there were both National and British Schools in Talgarth. There was a local pride in establishing such schools.

### **The Commission of Enquiry of 1846–47**

1833 was a turning-point in the history of education in England and Wales. In that year the government made its first grant to education. The amount was small, £20,000, and most of it went to the National Society, but here were the faint beginnings of government interest in education. By 1839, the grant had increased and a committee of the Privy Council on Education had been created, with James Kay-Shuttleworth as Secretary. It was Kay-Shuttleworth who oversaw the Commission of Enquiry into the State of Education in Wales (1846–47) whose Report became popularly known as 'Brâd y Llyfrau Gleision' (the 'Treason of the Blue Books').<sup>6</sup>

Three commissioners were appointed. The Commissioner who inspected Breconshire was Jellinger C. Symons, Esq. He stated that, "There are some very good schools in my district"<sup>7</sup> and he referred to the British School at Talgarth and to the National School at Hay, as examples. The salaries of local schoolmasters were cited: £50 p.a. at the Baptist School at Hay (Goff's School) and £70 at the National School, Hay. Under the heading of 'Evidence of the Incompetence of the Masters', the Rev. Mr Bevan of Hay reported to Jellinger Symons:

Perhaps the clergy are generally to blame in these parts for not attempting to elevate the position of the parish schoolmaster: so long as they consider him sufficiently remunerated by a salary little above the earnings of a common labourer, it is not to be expected that the laity will increase their subscriptions, so as to provide efficiently trained teachers.<sup>8</sup>

Along with the Rev. W. L. Bevan, Vicar of Hay, other witnesses to the Enquiry were the Rev. James Morgan, Vicar of Talgarth, and the Rev. David Charles, Principal of Trefecca Calvinistic Methodist College. This latter witness stated:

The people require schools unattached to any one creed. They regard liberty for their children to attend their own places of worship on the Sabbath as of the highest importance; it would therefore be desirable that, whatever Government aid be given, it be applied in such a manner as to secure this.<sup>9</sup>

Principal Charles, therefore, argued that Government aid should be given to both the National Schools and the British Schools. At Talgarth, Commissioner Symons regarded the British School with favour, but he had this to say about Talgarth National School where, he noted, “English is spoken”:

13 boys and 12 girls read [there were 45 pupils on roll], which they did in a lifeless manner, without even making sense of what they read. 3 or 4 of them could hardly read at all – even though they were in the Bible class. The girls read a trifle better than the boys. The master was requested to question the children: he seemed unused to this, and did so ‘deplorably ill’. Their knowledge of spelling was very indifferent. They repeated the Church Catechism but knew next to nothing about it: 18 did not know how much 50 pence (50d.) was. Two answered remarkably well; one was especially quick in mental calculation.<sup>10</sup>

Symons concluded his Report by stating that religious instruction in the district was generally very weak. However, he said that there were exceptions – Mr Bevan’s [National] School at Hay and the British School at Talgarth. This was wonderful praise indeed for Talgarth British School!

However, the *Reports on Education: Wales* have not enjoyed a good press in Wales, as shown in the two extracts below:

The Commissioners had worked very thoroughly, but their reports were undoubtedly biased in favour of an English, generally Church-orientated education.<sup>11</sup>

The Commissioners over-emphasized the dark side of the life they observed in Wales. When all three Reports were published [for north, mid and south Wales], the English press concentrated their attention, naturally, on the less favourable aspects of life in Wales, as reflected in them. It was this that raised the great outcry and led to vigorous protest – *Brâd y Llyfrau Gleision (Treachery of the Blue Books)* – so that the Reports passed down in Welsh memory ‘as a kind of Welsh Drogheda’: the Welsh people were incensed at the attack on their language, but less vividly recalled were the commissioners’ well-founded comments on the low educational standards and, indeed, illiteracy prevalent throughout Wales.<sup>12</sup>

Something had to be done to improve the state of education in Wales. Almost immediately a Normal School for teacher-training was opened in Brecon, in a building which was formerly an army barracks. By 1850 it had transferred to Swansea, where it has gone through various developments, as a teachers’ training college and as an institute of higher education, to continue today as Swansea Metropolitan University.

### Progress of Talgarth British School in the Mid-nineteenth Century

The British and Foreign Schools Society responded positively to the *Reports on Education: Wales*. In 1853, they appointed William Roberts of Blaina, better known by his bardic name of 'Nefydd', as their Agent in south Wales. His task was to encourage the establishment of more British schools in the area. On 2 September 1854, Nefydd visited Talgarth, along with Her Majesty's Inspector Mr Bowstead. They met the Rev. David Charles of Trefecca and others at the Talgarth British School. Nefydd advised that the British School Room should be altered, promising that the Committee of Council would pay half of the debt and other additional expenditure.

Nefydd next visited Talgarth British School on 10 September 1856. He found:

the School shut for want of a teacher. They are willing to give £25, with half the pence [School Pence] and half the capitation Grant, which . . . will amount to not less than £45 to £50, but we have no one for them . . . no one can be found anywhere, either possessing a Certificate or willing to agree on condition to be Certificated. They would rather have one knowing the Welsh language, but would take one without the qualification. This is the state of things at Talgarth, and it is likely to continue until Xmas next.<sup>13</sup>

On 13 August 1857 Nefydd visited Talgarth again. He wanted to check on the progress of Mr George, the new Master that he had recommended. Nefydd reported that he was pleased with the Master. He next returned to Talgarth in the following month, at the request of Mr George. There were only 18 children in the school and Mr George complained that the committee caused the school to be neglected and that it was "depreciated by many in the neighbourhood".<sup>14</sup> Nefydd had to use all of his skills of persuasion to get Mr George to stay on as Master.

However, by 1863 the school was thriving, with 93 pupils. 1863 is the year when its first log book starts. This is the first of six log books that cover the history of the school up to its transfer to new premises in 1975. The school evolved throughout that time, as reflected in its continually changing title: Talgarth British School; Talgarth Board School; Talgarth Council School; Talgarth Junior Mixed County Primary School; and Talgarth Junior Mixed and Infant School.

The six log books show that there were seven Head teachers between 1863 and 1975:

Mr William Jones:	up to 1863;
Mr Edward Jones:	1864–1866;
Mr Richard Farrow:	1866–1872;
Mr William Davies:	1872–1920;
Mr C. Alexander Price:	1920–1952;
Mr J. P. Jones:	1952–1970; and
Mr L. S. Davies:	from 1970.



According to the Revised Code of Regulations 1862, school log books had to be kept:

In every school receiving annual grants is to be kept, besides the ordinary registers of attendance, a diary or log book . . . The principal teacher must daily make in the log book the briefest entry which will suffice to specify either ordinary progress, or whatever other fact concerning the school or its teachers . . . No reflections or opinions of a general character are to be entered in the log book. No entry once made in the log book may be removed nor altered otherwise than by a subsequent entry. The inspector will call for the log book on his annual visit . . . The summary of the inspector's report . . . must be copied into the log book.<sup>15</sup>

School log books, therefore, are an invaluable aid to research into the history of education. The dimensions of the Talgarth British School are recorded in the first log book as: School Room, 37 feet long by 19 feet 7 inches broad; Class Room, 16 feet long by 14 feet 9 inches broad. Both rooms were 12 feet 6 inches high. The plan of the school is kept at the National Library of Wales at Aberystwyth.<sup>16</sup> This plan locates the school along Heol-y-Cefn Lane, next to a field called Cae Sgubor, owned by Edward Jones, Esq. of Llandoverly, and next to Barn Yard, belonging to William Williams, Esq., Surgeon of Talgarth.

Log Book No. 1 covers the period from 1863 to 1882. The school was then called 'Talgarth British School' and the first entry in that log book is dated 9 November 1863:

The attendance today is considerably greater than last week's owing to the fine state of the weather and the inspector's visit coming off tomorrow. I gave in the afternoon, the children a little instruction respecting tomorrow's proceedings.

Mr Bowstead, who had visited the school in September 1854 with Nefydd and the Rev. David Charles, was still the H.M.I. There were 93 pupils present on his visit and the staff consisted of:

Mr William Jones – Certificated Master, 3<sup>rd</sup> Class, 2<sup>nd</sup> Division;  
William Jones – Pupil Teacher, at the end of his second year; and  
Ellen Price – Sewing Mistress.

From January 1864, there was a new Master, Mr Edward Jones, Certificated 3<sup>rd</sup> Class, in his first year. During his two and a half years as master, the school increased to a maximum of 119 pupils. However, their attendance was far from regular, due to a variety of reasons: Talgarth, Hay and Brecon Fairs; stormy weather; children were kept at home to plant potatoes, to help with the hay harvest, with the harrowing, with collecting bark or to help with the shearing. Sometimes the children were kept at home because the parents could not afford the 'school pence'.<sup>17</sup>

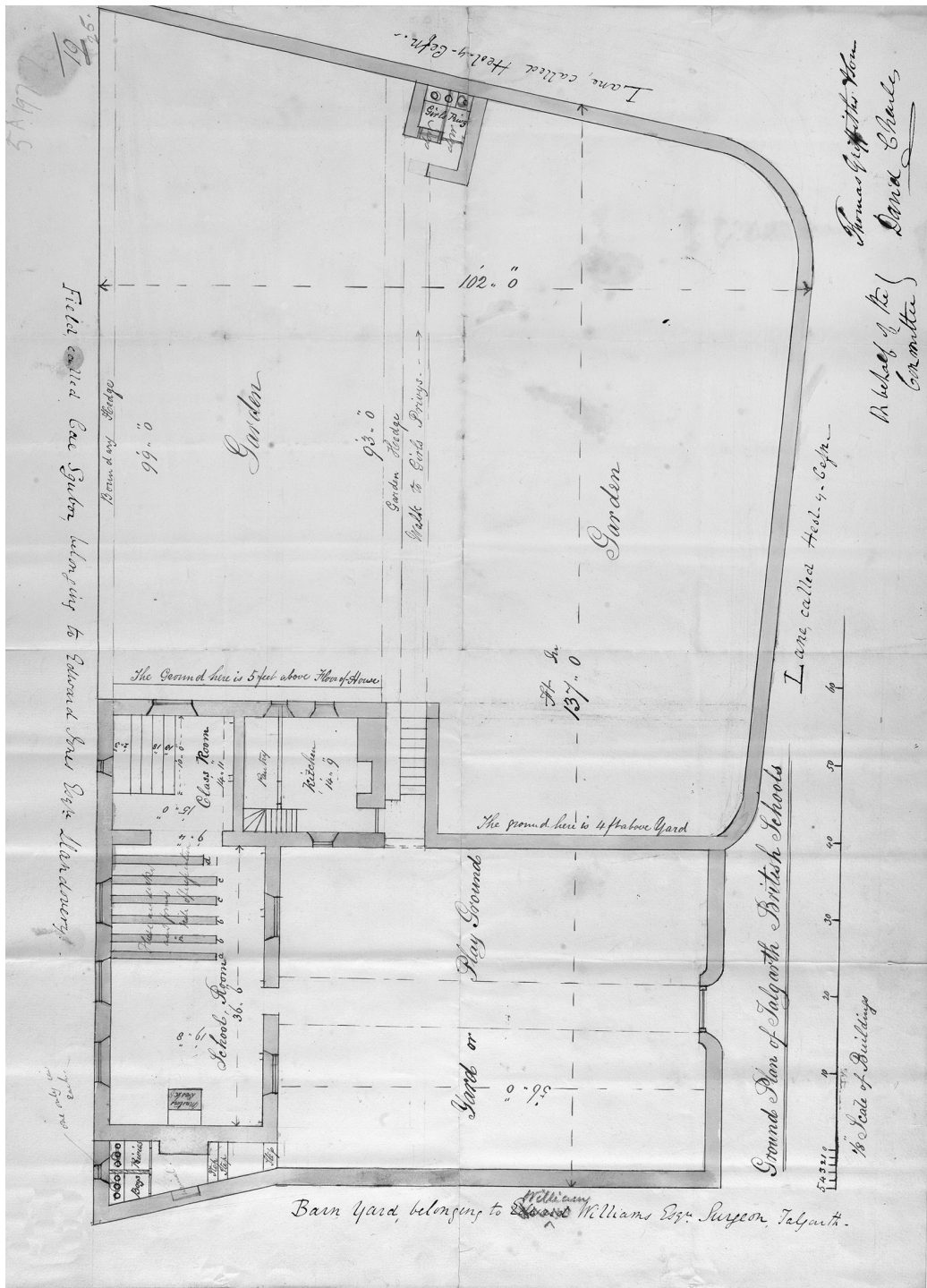


Fig. 1 Ground plan of Talgarth British School in the 1850s showing the play-ground (with boys privies at top left) and garden (with girls' privies near the boundary wall). The name of Rev. David Charles appears 'on behalf of the Committee'.

Courtesy of NLW

When parents do not send their children to school at the commencement of the week, it [is] seldom that they send after during that week. This fact arises from pecuniary considerations.<sup>18</sup>

8 pupils left the school in January 1865 to go to a 'Boarding School for young ladies' that had just opened in the town. In June 1865 some children absented themselves to go to the rustic sports at Boughrood; and the Master recorded that Talgarth Market, which was held for the first time on 24 June 1864, had "a strong influence on the attendance. The parents countenance the children to absent themselves from school on that day". The irregularity of attendance had a bad effect on the progress of the children recorded Mr Jones.

The first pupil names to be recorded in the log book are those of Sarah A. Morgan and Anne Vaughan who, on 4 November 1864, were very late coming to school because they had "something to do in the market". In the same month Mr Jones happened to see two of the boys fighting; he kept them in after school hours "until they became friends". Lateness was a continual problem:

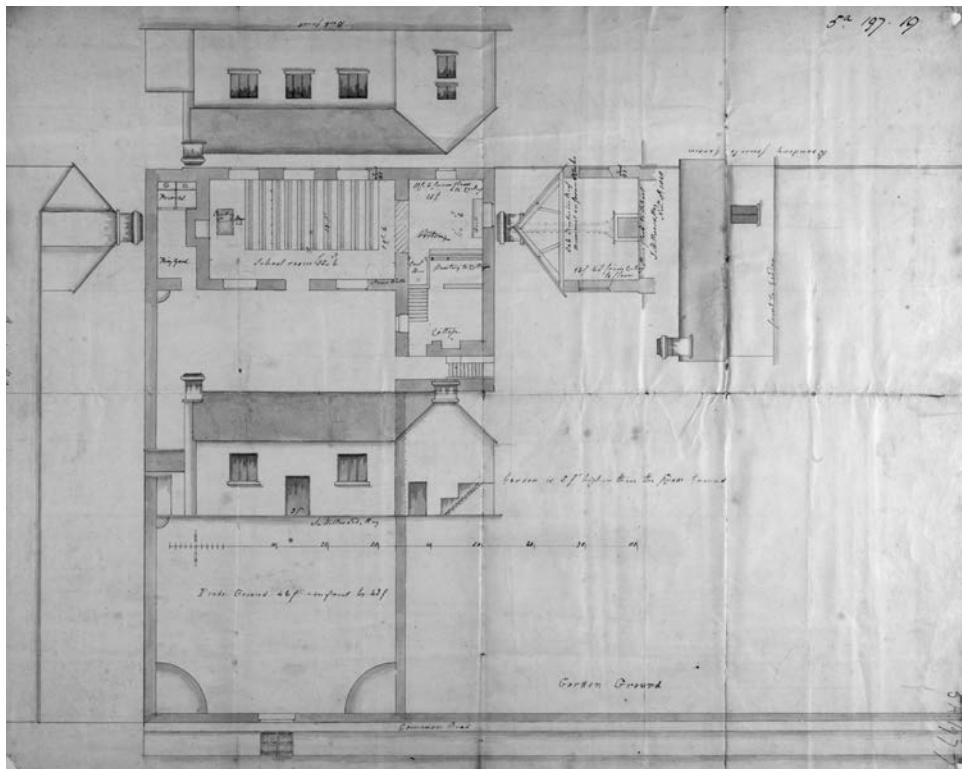


Fig. 2 Part of another plan of the school together with projections of the building from all four sides.

By permission of The National Library of Wales

29 children were kept in after school on 10 March 1865, “being all late-comers”. Lateness was often attributed to the fact that “the greatest number of the children belonging to the school have a great length of road in the morning and evening. They are children from the country”, recorded the Master on 26 February 1865. The children sometimes misbehaved: on 20 October 1864, the Master recorded: “I found the school rather noisy today. Cause unknown”; and on 20 July 1865, the Master received a complaint that some of the children were throwing stones at “certain cows”.

Treats for the children were fairly regular. In April 1864 a Tea Party was held in the neighbourhood and another in May, after which the children went to ‘Wombwell’s Menagerie’, which was visiting Talgarth. In June 1865, “The school was entertained by the kind ladies of this place with tea and cake. After the tea the children went out to play on a field belonging to the Ashburton Arms, kindly lent for the purpose”.

Illness was a regular visitor. On 17 June 1864 the Master recorded: “Many children of the school are unwell. There are many diseases in the neighbourhood nowadays”. On 2 March 1865 Mr Jones noted: “Some of the country people are afraid to send their children to school, the Smallpox being at Talgarth”; and in July 1865 there was measles in the district.

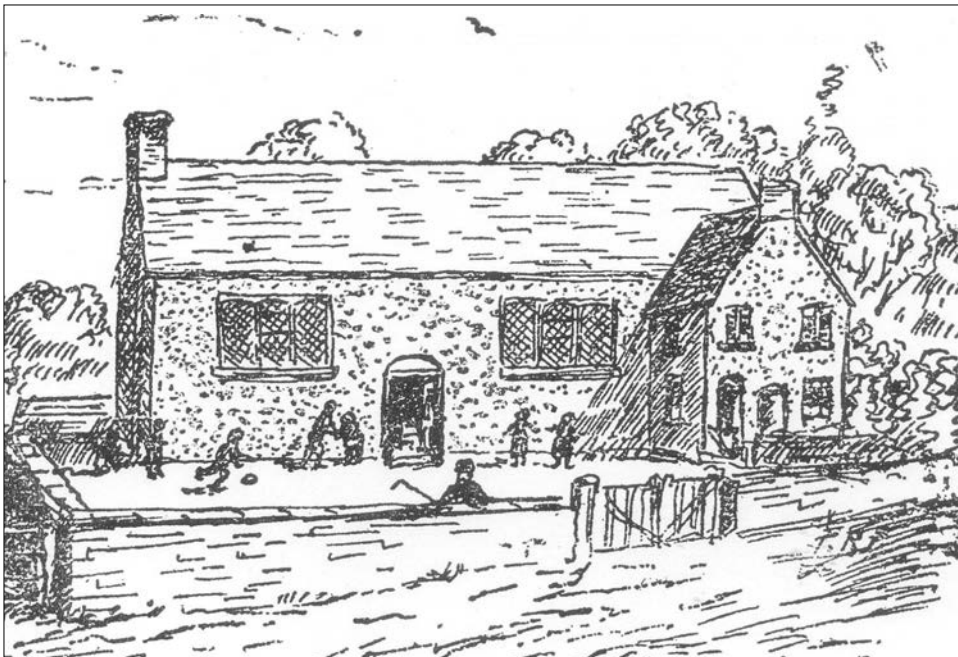


Fig. 3 Illustration of the Talgarth National School in 1870 in *Atlas Brycheiniog* (see note 1).

**Mr Richard Farrow restores the school's reputation**

On 21 June 1866 the log book records: “[A] Few children absent themselves from school . . . thinking it almost useless to come until the new teacher comes”. The new teacher was Mr Richard Farrow, a Probationer, who was to serve at the school for six years. His first log book entry, on 10 September 1866, recorded that he found the pupils very backward in Notation and Dictation. In fact, there were only 24 pupils present! By 17 July, there were 36 present, “some of whom I found to be very backward”,<sup>19</sup> noted Mr Farrow. He also found them to be badly behaved:

A jealous feeling seems to exist between the scholars of this school and those of the NATIONAL [School] and to my surprise this noon-time they came to pelting each other with stones. A little girl was injured on the forehead. Having, with my own boys, thoroughly investigated the matter, I went to and spoke to the master of the other school and also visited the little girl's friends. The other teacher has promised not to allow his boys to do anything of the sort in the future.<sup>20</sup>

This was not an isolated incidence of stone-throwing. On 15 February 1867 the master recorded: “Edward Jones a scholar struck with a stone thrown by Wm. Williams in anger. Friendship restored”. The first reference to corporal punishment is in February 1869: “A lad insubordinate – caned him”. But the rivalry with the National School continued:

The windows have been frequently broken and suspicion has been fixed upon some lads of the Church School. Today two more panes were smashed and three of those lads were discovered running away. Sent to the master and ascertained the name of the lad who threw the stones. Shall insist upon payment. It is to be greatly regretted that a decided ill feeling is manifested by the opposite party.<sup>21</sup>

Perhaps Mr Farrow could redress the balance: on 24 May 1869 he recorded: “I dismissed a girl for insubordination. She is today gone to the ‘other school’”; and on 2 December 1871 he recorded: “A lad was extremely impudent yesterday and because he was corrected I understand that he and his brother will be removed to the Church school”!

Mr Farrow must have had a challenging task to restore the school which, according to the 1866 Inspector's Report had been closed for part of the year, due to the difficulty of obtaining a Certificated Teacher. This had caused the school's attendance to diminish and its efficiency to be lowered. The Inspector had faith in Mr Farrow. In his 1866 Report he recorded: “There is much need of improvement and every prospect of attaining it under the present master”. This faith was rewarded. By March 1867 there were 125 children present for the annual treat! Mr Farrow had to cope with the help of only a Sewing Mistress (Elizabeth Jones) and two Monitors (John Lewis and Reg Phillips).

The curriculum was broadened: the Geography of Wales was taught; there were drawing lessons; the sol-fa method of singing was introduced; there was English History; and innovations like the school photograph (June 1871) were introduced, the boys and the girls being photographed in two separate groups by a Mr Grant – “It was to them a great treat”, recorded Mr Farrow. The school was also appealing to adult learners: “On Wednesday the father of two scholars, who a short time ago lost his right hand, came. The adults are very backward”.<sup>22</sup>

Irregular attendance continued to be a problem: “A great many of the older children absent being engaged on the land. Many of them are not likely to return till the decline of summer” (9 April 1867); “A great falling off in attendance – Brecon Fair. On the whole the children attend extremely irregularly. Most of the absentees are amongst the older children many of whom are either at field work or bark picking” (6 May 1867). On 1 October 1868, however, Mr Farrow noted: “The Church School has been closed for some time; it was refused to be opened, so several of the scholars came to the British School”. Even so, the log book entries continue to complain about irregular attendance: on 5 October 1868 the master recorded: “A lot of absence due to whooping cough, colds and apple and acorn gathering”. Mr Farrow further recorded:

The irregular attendance of many of the children makes it extremely difficult to prepare them for the examination.<sup>23</sup> I do all I can to induce regular attendance, such as visiting and sending after the absentees, but in several cases my exertions are futile. One very bad trait of the common people here is to promise and not to perform”.<sup>24</sup>

Pupils at this time saw school attendance as a seasonal affair. In November 1868 attendance was up to 118, which was higher than it had been for some time. Mr Farrow recorded: “Several of the bigger boys, who have not attended since last winter, returned” (23 November) and, two days later, he recorded, “Admitted a new scholar – a young man who will probably only attend during the winter months”.

Mr Farrow did restore the fortunes of Talgarth British School. The 1867 Inspector’s Report stated: “This school has made marked progress since last year, and is now in a very promising condition. I trust that a Pupil Teacher may be apprenticed in it next year”. And in his next Report, for 1868, HMI Mr Bowstead stated:

This school is making satisfactory progress – but it needs some addition to its teaching staff. It would be desirable also to erect a teacher’s residence . . . Mr Farrow will shortly receive his Certificate.<sup>25</sup>

90 children had made the necessary number of attendances for the 1868 examination. 77 were examined, in the following standards:

*The Talgarth British School and the development of a system of education* 119

i	ii	iii	iv	v	vi	vii	Infants	
21	18	8	10	4	1	3	12	(77)

By June 1869 Mr Farrow recorded that, because attendance was keeping up, at about 120, and because the “little ones [were] very troublesome, it would be a blessing if there were one good school in the village with two sections – one for the infants under a mistress – instead of two as at present”.<sup>26</sup>

On 25 July 1870 there is a very sad entry in the log book: Mr Farrow recorded “the death of my little son”. There was a holiday on the following day – “Funeral of my little son”.

In October 1870 Mr Farrow received a notice requesting information about the school for the Committee of Council on Education, “in conformity with the Education Bill of 1870”. This was Forster’s Education Bill, which was to create a national system of Elementary Board Schools.<sup>27</sup> An entry in the log book for 21 December 1870, recorded:

It is said the 4 or 5 new schools are to be built in neighbouring parishes – Unless something be done here, this school must materially suffer therefrom, as children from all these places attend here.

### **William Thomas Davies and the Talgarth Board School**

Mr Farrow resigned on 28 June 1872. He had now become certificated in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Class. He was not to witness the reorganisation of elementary education in the Talgarth area. This was to be the task of Mr William Thomas Davies, who became Head Teacher on 1 July 1872. Like Mr Farrow, Mr Davies started as a Probationer, but he was to serve the Talgarth School for a colossal 48 years!

The school quickly built up to more than 150 pupils, by October 1873. Some of the pupils were no better behaved than previously. On 17 January 1873 Mr Davies recorded:

Gave a strict charge to the boys about fighting which prevails to a considerable extent in the town generally among the boys. A parent complained to me that the bigger boys instigated the little ones to do so.

In April 1873 one boy was expelled “for his impudence”. In January 1874 a parent called at school because he found his boy “on the road intending to play the truant. He told me to punish him should he be absent any other day”.

The increased number of pupils enjoyed the treats that continued to be offered: e.g., at the end of November 1872, Mr Thomas of the Radnor Arms loaned his field and the children had a sports there; in February 1874 a football was purchased for ten shillings and six pence and Mr Davies exhorted the boys “to take care not to quarrel when playing”; and, in May 1874, 145 children were treated to the circus – “The gentleman who mainly contributed to the

treat was Mr Moses Webb of the town". Rumours that Talgarth Church School was not to be reopened led to 20 extra scholars arriving in September 1873.

The school was so full that, in March 1874, Mr Davies had to inform some parents that he could not take their children "on account of the large attendance already made at the school". When the school was inspected on 22 June 1874, the staff included Mr Davies, William Samuel (Pupil Teacher), Thomas Hargest (Monitor) and Mrs Catherine Jones (Sewing Mistress). The Inspector commented that the "room was very much crowded" and that "a larger staff should be employed". By April 1875 Mr Davies was calling for an Infant Department. This issue was to be addressed through reorganisation.

The school now began to enter a new era, as 'Talgarth Board School'. The log book begins to make reference to the School Board: 4 February 1875 – "On Thursday, a holiday was given, the room being used by the recently formed Board, who met that day for the first time". The School Boards were the creation of Forster's Education Act of 1870. Where no elementary schools existed, School Boards were to be established to provide the need. Money would be provided on a 'pound-for-pound' basis, so that a system of Public Elementary Schools (Board Schools) could be created. The School Boards could also incorporate already-existing 'Voluntary' Schools, like the British Schools.

More 'Voluntary' schools had already been built in the Talgarth district, with church schools at Llanfihangel Talylyn in 1860, Llyswen in 1864 and Llangorse in 1866. With the creation of the School Boards, the pace of educational provision was to accelerate considerably. Present at the first meeting of the Talgarth School Board held in the British School Room on 4 February 1875 were:

- Messrs John Bowen, JP, of the Chaucefield (Chairman)
- Thomas Evans, Independent Minister, Trefecca Fawr (Vice-Chairman)
- R. W. Bridgewater, Porthamal
- D. Price, The Court, Llanelieu
- L. Peace Jones, Druggist, Talgarth

These members of the School Board decided that a school should be built at Pengenffordd<sup>28</sup> and, as the Church School in Talgarth had been closed, there was deficiency of school accommodation in the town. Therefore, steps should be taken to secure the Talgarth British School. This was achieved by transferring the school to the Board. This was duly completed on 5 October 1875. Now more resources were available to make improvements to Talgarth Board School.

In February 1876, Mr William Davies recorded that "the members of the School Board accompanied by Mr Williams the architect [Brecon] inspected the present buildings and site of the proposed additions". By the end of February, the plans and specifications for the new buildings were made



available to Mr Davies and, in May, building work began with the “taking down” of the Class Room. At the end of June, the School was inspected for the first time as Talgarth Board School, and the Inspector reported:

The master has been lately working under some disadvantages owing to the building of the necessary additions to the school-room . . . With better accommodation I hope to find an improvement in the general order and discipline of the school. The average attendance in the present premises must not exceed 90.

The Board decided to place a limit on the number of pupils attending: “no children from other districts shall be admitted to school in its present size”.<sup>29</sup> Despite this, the weekly average for 26 January 1877 was 128.5!

This increased attendance may have been due to an additional factor. In 1876, Sandon’s Education Act had been passed, with the aim of dealing with the problem of irregular attendance. School Attendance Officers were appointed and bye-laws were passed to ensure regular attendance. However not everyone was motivated by this Act. On 14 December 1877 Mr Davies recorded in the log book:

From inquiries this week, I found that a child kept at home was allowed to remain because her father had given consent when asked by the child herself. When I next saw him [the father] I informed him of the absurdity of such conduct, as well as the violation of the Education Act (really).

On 5 April 1878 Mr Davies further recorded:

The indifference that some parents show with regard to the regular attendance of children is very great. I hope that the Board will provide a check in the Bye-laws they are about to pass.

By July 1879 a Relieving Officer had been appointed. He was Mr Price and it is recorded on that date that he brought to school two “little lads, who had been very reluctant in their attendance”. As throughout the whole of Wales, head teachers were now getting assistance to try to eradicate the problem of irregular attendance, which has been referred to as one of the “twin evils” of elementary education in the nineteenth century.<sup>30</sup> So, by February 1880 Talgarth School Board decided to take proceedings against the guardians of some boys who had been irregular in their attendance and brought the case before the Magistrates. “Considerable improvement has resulted from the prosecution”, noted Mr Davies on 27 February 1880. The Attendance [Relieving] Officer continued to be active: in February 1894 Mr Davies informed the Officer that 3 or 4 children from the same family had “gone truanting”; “after considerable trouble – following them nearly a mile away, he succeeded in bringing two of them to school. I caned both of them”.

In the meantime, progress had been made in the building improvements at the school. On 29 June 1877 the new classroom had been used for the Inspector's visit and the final transfer to the new building took place in July. Further relief from overcrowding came when the Chairman of the Board, the Rev. Thomas Evans, informed Mr Davies in February 1878 that an Assistant Mistress was about to be engaged and that the infants would be taken together in the Upper room "until further arrangements were made". In fact, Miss Johanna Elias was appointed as Mistress of the 'Talgarth Infants School' from March 1878, when there were 56 pupils in attendance. The Infants School started its own log book from 22 March 1878, when Miss Elias recorded that, "The children were very tiresome throughout the week".<sup>31</sup> Subsequently on 26 June 1878 HM Inspection referred to the Talgarth Board Schools. Mr Davies was now supported by two Pupil Teachers, Roger Owen Johns and William Jones Pritchard. At that inspection, the HMI reported:

Very convenient new school rooms have been erected, but at present they are not well furnished with apparatus and furniture. Blackboards, slates and additional desks are wanted in the Mixed Department and a mistress's Desk, Cupboard and chair. Pictures and books should be provided for the new Infants' Department.

Treats continued to be given and there were extra-curricular activities. In March 1877 the boys played a football match at Hay. On 20 July 1877 a sports was held "in a field close to the town", given by the Committee of the Market hall, as the corner-stone of the building was laid on that day. In October 1881 a holiday was given on the occasion of the visit of the Prince and Princess of Wales to Swansea. In 1884 gardening was introduced on the school curriculum and, in October of the same year, pupils of the Talgarth and Pengenffordd Schools were entertained to tea and sports in a field loaned by Mrs Thomas, Radnor Arms. The school was making excellent progress at this time: Mr Davies was now Certificated First Class and there was an Assistant Master (Mr J. R. Griffiths), an Assistant Mistress (Miss A. Smith) and a Pupil Teacher (Jno. Lewis). The Inspector reported on 21 September 1885:

This school has made an immense stride in general efficiency during the past year. It has in fact no really weak point . . . Making a slight allowance for the effects of the recent epidemic of measles the school deserves a place in the group of Excellent schools.<sup>32</sup>

This was rare praise, indeed. The children were attending in huge numbers: there were 180 on roll in November 1885. The children were being encouraged with the award of Book Prizes, for example. In December 1887, these prizes were awarded as follows: 1<sup>st</sup> Standard – Daniel Pugh; 2<sup>nd</sup> – E. Games; 3<sup>rd</sup> – Alice Newton; 4<sup>th</sup> – A. Watkins; 5<sup>th</sup> – Kate Edwards; 6<sup>th</sup> – D. I. Jones; and 7<sup>th</sup> – W. P.

Edwards. An innovation from 1891 was the introduction of Object Lessons, such as ‘the Pressure of the Atmosphere’, ‘Silver coins in use in England’, ‘The Formation of Soils’, ‘The Dog’.

Not all of the children and their parents appreciated what the school was doing for them. On 31 October 1890 Mr Davies complained of the unpunctuality of several children: “Having made enquiries into the matter, I found that in some instances the fault lay with the parents – breakfast, etc. being late”. On 17 April 1891 corporal punishment was “inflicted” upon a lad for truancing. On 21 October 1892 Mr Davies recorded:

Had to punish one lad this morning for truancing. His mother brought him to the school, and informed me that he had been sent to school, but had, as she said, ‘gone mitching’.

Parental support was not always forthcoming, as noted on 28 October 1892:

Had some little trouble with one or two boys again this week, on account of their truancing. My difficulty is considerably increased in dealing with them because their mothers come with them, begging for pardon, and making some excuse.

In 1896 the first reference is made to the County Scholarships. Following on from the Welsh Intermediate Education Act of 1889, most of the County or Intermediate Schools of Wales had opened in 1896. Builth County Intermediate School led the way in Breconshire, when it opened on 17 February 1896.<sup>33</sup> Four of the girl scholarship candidates from Talgarth came on top of the list for the district: Laura Williams, Emily V. Thomas (both of whom won scholarships to Brecon Girls’ Intermediate School), Mia Lewis and Elsie Thomas. Six scholarships were offered by Hay and Talgarth District for boys to attend the Brecon Boys’ Intermediate School: all six were won by boys of the Talgarth School and I. S. Kennedy topped the list for the whole county. This again was wonderful success for Talgarth School.

### **The Local Education Authority era**

In 1902, another Education Act was passed – Balfour’s Education Act. Locally-elected School Boards were abolished and were replaced by Local Education Authorities. In Talgarth’s case, local control was lost and was transferred to Brecon. In many instances, the changes imposed by the 1902 Education Act caused resentment. Talgarth School now took on a new name, ‘Talgarth Council School’. Talgarth Council School Mixed Department Log Book No. 3 covers the years from 1900 to 1915.

On 20 February 1903 the school was closed: the new Asylum on the Chaucefied was opened and many hundreds of visitors had come for the occasion. There were now 138 pupils on roll. In April 1904 there was an official

HMI visit and it was noted that the lavatories and a supply of water were to be provided. Book Prizes were awarded in 1905 to May Williams (Std. VI), David Jones (V), Bertha Hughes (IV), Elizabeth Maskell (III) and to Minnie Cartwright (II). The school had regularly closed on fair days: in December 1905 the Clerk to the District Education Committee (Mr Weale) informed the Headmaster that this must not happen in future, except for very large fairs. This was an example of the loss of local independence. In March 1906 the school was closed on a Monday, on account of the fair – “usually one of the largest in the year”,<sup>34</sup> noted the Headmaster!

In September 1906 Mr G. Tudor, Clerk to the LEA, visited the school to inspect a plot of land purchased from Principal Prys, Trefecca, for enlarging the school. Mr Tudor was involved again in April 1907: the Sanitary Inspector (Mr Pritchard) ordered that the school should be closed, but Mr Tudor instructed the Headmaster not to do so! In October 1907 the school was closed by order of the Medical Officer of Health (Dr Heather, of Hay) and remained closed for ten weeks because of an outbreak of scarlet fever.

When the school reopened in January 1908, pupils returned to some very cold weather. Several children were absent, suffering from chilblains. In March 1910 the log book again informs us of the coldness of the school room: it was only 47 degrees at the start of the day and just 48 degrees at the close. In fact, the Inspector’s Report at the time commented on lateness and on improving the heating! The weather continued to hinder the children: in January 1910, several of the children from the outlying districts had been absent for several days because of the inaccessible state of the roads – they were flooded to a considerable depth by the continuous wet weather that prevailed. Conditions within the school did not improve: in January 1912 the room temperature was down to 27 degrees!

In January 1907 the Headmaster had attended a meeting convened by the LEA to discuss the question of teaching Welsh in the elementary schools. This was the time when O. M. Edwards had been appointed as Chief Inspector of the newly-created Welsh Department of the Board of Education in London. He was very keen that the Welsh language should be taught in the schools of Wales and that the schools should reflect the life of the community they served. Subsequently, on 3 March 1911, the school was closed in the afternoon in celebration of St David. The Headmaster recorded: “In the morning in accordance with the instruction received from the Clerk to the Education Committee, a programme bearing especially on the patron saint was gone through”.<sup>35</sup> This was the first time that St David was referred to in the log books of Talgarth School. It may also be noted that when history has been referred to previously in the log books, it was always English history. This was typical of the time and for some time afterwards in many schools in Wales.

The LEA continued to issue instructions. On 26 May 1911 Empire Day was celebrated “according to the programme received from the LEA”. On 12 and 13 July 1911 the school was closed, “by order of the LEA”, on account of the Investiture of the Prince of Wales at Caernarfon Castle. Celebration of St David’s Day and Empire Day then continued to be regular events at Talgarth School. On 30 January 1914 a successful School Concert was held. Preparations had been going on for some weeks in the Town Hall. The Concert was repeated in February, by request, and was further repeated at the ‘Brecon and Radnor Asylum’. The children’s musical talents were obviously developing and, after the St David’s Day celebrations in March 1914, they hoisted the Red Dragon on the flag-pole<sup>36</sup> in the corner of the school yard and sang ‘Hen Wlad fy Nhadau’.

August 1914 witnessed the outbreak of the First World War. In October, two pupils left for Newcastle on Tyne because their father had joined the Royal Flying Corps as a first class mechanic. When Empire Day was celebrated on 21 May 1915, a collection was made in the school: £11s. was collected for the ‘Children’s Empire Day Fund’, “to provide parcels to be sent out to the soldiers and sailors”.<sup>37</sup> In June 1915 a new Attendance Officer (Mr Vivian Smart) was appointed because the previous one, Mr Phillips, had joined the army. On 2 March 1917 the sad news was received of the death of a former pupil, Private William Williams, killed in action in France. David Phillips of Llanfilo and David Morris of Talgarth had also previously lost their lives.<sup>38</sup> On 23 November 1917 Corporal Ivor Powell, a former pupil, visited the school and “gave a very vivid and interesting address on the Geography of the ‘Western Front’ and also showed the two kinds of respirators used by the soldiers”.<sup>39</sup> No reference is made in the log book to the end of the First World War.

Headmaster Mr W. T. Davies was due to retire on 13 December 1916, “according to age limits”. His service was in fact extended. This may have been because of the shortage of male teachers during the First World War. His service was to be extended several times more. By 1917 there were 144 pupils on roll. The HMI Report for 1916–1917 commented on the fact that the school had been overcrowded for the previous two years and that enlargements to the school buildings were needed. The staff included Mr Davies and three uncertificated teachers: Margaret Lewis, Kate Phillips and Blodwen Davies.

Mr Davies eventually retired at the end of July 1920. The HMI Report, dated 30 July 1920, noted that, “The Master is about to retire after many years of useful service. The teachers all work conscientiously and the instruction generally is efficient and satisfactory”. Mr Davies himself recorded:

After serving as Headteacher for the long period of 48 years at these schools, my connection with it comes to a close this day, and my successor – an old pupil of the school whom I greatly honour – will commence duties after the Summer holidays,

in September next. A surprise was sprung on me this afternoon, when, after addressing a few remarks to the children by way of advice, a member of the Second Standard presented me with a parcel containing a Silver mounted travelling clock and a wallet with treasury notes therein, as an appreciation from the Staff and scholars.<sup>40</sup>

Mr Davies's successor, Mr C. Alexander Price, had been acting as Senior Assistant at New Tredegar. His first entry in the log book on 7 September 1920 reads: "I assumed duties as Headteacher, in succession to one whom I very sincerely respect. I trust I may have health, strength and guidance to prove a worthy successor to him". Like his predecessor, Mr Price was to devote a long period of his life to Talgarth School: in his case, 32 years! Mr W. T. Davies was not finished with the school, however: on 13 and 14 October 1920 he stood in for Mr Price when the latter had been granted leave of absence; and on 22 May 1923 Mr Davies called in, to examine the registers!

On 19 July 1921 Mr Price recorded that two men from the Electrical Works, Talgarth, "called in to make notes regarding Estimate for Installation of electrical light in this School". Electricity was eventually installed by September 1923. By 1923 the celebration of St David's Day was broadening: as well as an address on St David, reference was made to local celebrities – Howell Harris and William Williams, Pantycelyn. Two gramophones were purchased from money raised on that occasion.

Pupils continued to suffer from various contagious diseases: diphtheria caused the school to be closed from 23 November to 5 December 1921; the school was closed at the end of 1922, when 58 children had mumps and there was also a case of quinsy and of cattle ring-worm at this time; in June 1923 the school was closed for two weeks, because of measles; and then the school seems to have been spared from epidemic diseases for some time.

The school was visited by HMI on 3 October 1923. The subsequent Report stated: "The work of this school is well planned, and the teaching is above the average". However, it was noted that the school was overcrowded, with 136 pupils on roll, when there was room for only 117. The Headteacher had a class of 57! The Report recommended an additional classroom, to deal with this overcrowding, as well as the congestion at neighbouring Bronllys School. The appointment of a male Certificated Assistant was recommended, so that differentiated work could be developed for 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> Year courses.

On 6 February 1924 Mr E. Baden Powell commenced duties as Assistant Teacher. He had been trained at Carmarthen Training College. On 18 July 1924 the new classroom was in place, in the school playground. The problem of overcrowding was not solved however: in April 1925 there were 170 pupils on roll! An innovation in 1925 was the introduction of Cookery, when 16 girls from Standards V to VII had a two-hour lesson. In March 1926 a piano was

purchased; and on 16 June 1926 the Recreation Field was opened. It was placed “at the disposal of the town” by Mr D. Evans, Great Porthamal. On the occasion of the opening, the children were dismissed early in order to attend a celebratory tea in the Town Hall. An Honours Bard was presented to the school on 26 July 1926, by Mr John Lewis, formerly a Pupil Teacher at Talgarth School, and now Headmaster of Page Green School, Tottenham, London. Many parents, former pupils and friends attended on the occasion and the children performed Folk Dances and Physical Drill.

An entry in Log Book No. 4 states that on 1 June 1927, the Director ‘telephoned’. A further development at this time was the introduction of the School Visit. In October 1928 the top classes travelled by train to Brecon, to visit the Brecon & Radnor Printing Works, the Central Repository and the Cathedral. In June 1929, 40 children visited Stratford-on-Avon. 21 pupils went on an Educational Excursion to Bristol in May 1930. Other places visited were: Bath (1931); Pendine School Camp (1932 – and a regular event after that date); London Zoological Gardens (1933); and, in 1938, visits were made to local historical sites, like the 4,000 year old burial mound at Ty Isaf, near Pengenffordd, then recently excavated by the famous archaeologist, Mr F. Grimes.

Some former pupils continued to visit the school and their achievements are interesting to note. In 1928 Mr Enos Hughes visited; he was late Postmaster, city of York. In 1930 the Rev. W. Powell, Mulgoa, New South Wales, Australia, visited; he had left Talgarth School in 1869; his home then was Pentwyn, Tredustan. In 1938 Mr Alun Jones visited while home on leave from West Africa, where he was employed in the banking service.

Mr C. Alexander Price’s time at Talgarth was almost cut short. In December 1930 he was interviewed for the Headship of Mount Street School, Brecon. He was successful and was offered the post. However, by February 1931 Mr Price records that he was so worried about the new post that his health was suffering. In fact, he wrote to the Education Committee asking for permission to remain at Talgarth School. “I have just been informed by telegram that my wish has been granted”,<sup>41</sup> he recorded, with relief. Mr Price had certainly left his decision until the last moment: the interviews for his job were being held on the very day he received the telegram! Mr E. Baden Powell, the Assistant Teacher, had been short-listed for the post. He must have been disappointed but his loss was Talgarth School’s gain as Mr Price served for another 21 years, until 1952!

Talgarth Mixed Council School Log Book No 5 covers the years from 1931 to 1945. Entries in this log book for the late 1930s reveal the imminence of the Second World War. In June 1938 the Headmaster attended ARP courses at the Barracks, Brecon. On 30 September 1938 at the time of the Munich Crisis,

the first evacuee was received at the school: a pupil from Stanley Road School, Teddington, London, was admitted; his mother had moved from London temporarily "in case of air raid, should war break out between Czechoslovakia and Germany over the Sudeten territory".<sup>42</sup> The reopening of the school after the summer holidays in September 1939 was delayed for one week, to 11 September, because of the outbreak of war. Three evacuee pupils were immediately received from Air Raid Danger Zones.

Mr E. Baden Powell had been appointed Headmaster of Llanfaes School, Brecon, in December 1938. His replacement, Mr R. F. Price, a former pupil, immediately joined up. No replacement could be found immediately, so the Headmaster had to take a class of 53 pupils. Every morning from the beginning of term, pupils received Gas mask Drill. For dispersal purposes, in the event of an air raid, pupils were divided into groups and practice was given in evacuating the school.

In July 1940, 159 evacuee children from London were billeted in Talgarth and Bronllys. The evacuee children were from St Saviour's School, Southwark and from Tennyson Road School. Both were London County Council schools. The evacuees' school was conducted separately from that of the local pupils. They were accommodated at the Town Hall, the Church Hall and in a room above the Imperial Café in Talgarth. The Memorial Hall, Bronllys was also acquired for their use.

Private evacuees were also received: from Manchester, Newport and Cardiff (July 1940); from Bristol and Watford (December 1940); and from Brighton (March 1941), for example. At the end of July 1940, strips of paper were pasted to the panes of all windows to prevent glass flying in the event of a bomb exploding nearby. In September 1940, bomb blast walls were built at the entrance to the boys' and the girls' porches. Expanding metal was placed on the windows in the main room and textile fabric was to be placed on all windows. It was at this time that another former pupil was reported fatally wounded in an air raid on Liverpool; this was Sergeant Emlyn Jones.

The school contributed consistently to National Savings throughout the War: in November 1940, it was War Weapons Week; in 1941, the school contributed to Warship Week; in 1943, it was the Wings for Victory campaign; and in 1944, it was the Salute the Soldier campaign. By the end of the war, the school group had saved £1,831-15s-10d.

There was cooperation between Talgarth School and the London evacuees. The St David's Day celebrations in 1941 were held in conjunction with the two London schools. On 21 May 1941 the Ascension Day service was held in conjunction with the London schools and the service was conducted by the Provost of Southwark. In June 1941 a cricket match was arranged on the Recreation Ground between Talgarth School and the London pupils.



In November 1943 a Tree Planting Ceremony took place at Westfields: London County Council donated four plane trees to commemorate the stay of the London evacuees at Talgarth. In July 1944 more evacuees arrived in the Talgarth area and the school was closed to enable teachers to assist the billeting officer with about 70 evacuees from Epsom. The evacuees were sent to Talgarth in order to escape from “the menace of the flying bombs”.<sup>43</sup>

VE Day – Victory in Europe – was celebrated on 8 May 1945. A thanksgiving service was held in St Gwendoline’s, the Parish Church. The school was closed for two days, during which time there was a tea and sports as part of the ‘Send-off’ for the London evacuees, who were soon to return home. On 8 June a cricket match was arranged with the London pupils; on 27 June a thanksgiving service was held; and on 29 June the log book records:

The LCC and Epsom pupils are leaving by train this afternoon at 1.30. Some of these pupils have been here for five years, living in the homes of our pupils. To enable our pupils to see their little friends off at the station, school will close this morning at 12 o’clock and we shall re-assemble at 1.15 pm. We returned to school from Station at 1.45 pm.

New educational opportunities were available in the post-war era, as a result of the 1944 Education Act. According to this Act, secondary education for all pupils would be compulsory, the school leaving age would be raised to 15 and all pupils aged 11+ would be transferred to a secondary school. Consequently, in August 1946, the Headmaster attended a meeting of the Reconstruction Committee at Gwernyfed, where it was suggested that a Secondary Modern School should be established to serve the Hay and Talgarth District.

In September 1948, dinners were served in the school canteen for the first time: 80 children and 3 staff dined there. However, an even more momentous change was to occur: on 5 June 1950, 47 pupils (23 boys and 24 girls) were transferred to Gwernyfed Secondary Modern School, which opened on that day.<sup>44</sup>

The transfer of 47 pupils aged 11+ from Talgarth School to Gwernyfed School had a huge knock-on effect. This was the case for elementary schools generally throughout Wales and England. The term ‘elementary education’ no longer applied in the wake of the 1944 Education Act. Talgarth School was now a ‘County Primary School’ with pupil numbers reduced to 93 (41 boys and 52 girls), all aged under 11 years. The staff at the start of 1951 included Headteacher Mr C. Alexander Price and Misses Phillips, Lewis and Joyce. Miss Lewis was due to retire at the end of the Easter term but, sadly, she died very suddenly in February 1951; she had served the school for 45 years. Mr Price’s term of office was also coming to an end. His successor, Mr Josiah Presdee Jones, Senior Assistant at Camrose Secondary Modern School, Edgware,

Harrow, Middlesex, was appointed at the end of November 1951, to take up his appointment from 1 May 1952.

Mr J. P. Jones served for 18 years. He was faced almost immediately with an Inspection on 18 September 1952. There were 104 pupils on roll, organised in four classes. The Report stated: "The Headmaster has made a promising start here and has already established a happy relationship with Staff and pupils".

The school was now making many more educational visits. On 23 October 1952 there was a visit to Builth, on the occasion of the visit of HM Queen Elizabeth II to Mid Wales. On 11 June 1953, 93 pupils and 3 teachers visited Brecon, to see the Coronation Film. Six days later there was an excursion to St Fagan's and Cardiff Docks. In January 1954, 74 children and 3 teachers went to Brecon to see the film 'Conquest of Everest'. In 1955 there was a visit to the Claerwen Dam and to the Llywelyn Monument at Cilmery. In 1957 Talybont Waterworks, Crickhowell Castle and Tretower Court were visited. In 1959 the School Visit was made to Swansea Docks and the Gower coast. Dinas Castle, Tretower Court, the Canal Locks and Brecon Museum were the attractions in 1961. In 1965 a visit was made to Dan-yr-ogof Caves and to Swansea.

Miss Katie Phillips retired from the staff in 1954. She was a former pupil who had become a Pupil Teacher as far back as 1907. In 1956 Mr W. J. Gittins was appointed as certificated assistant master. In 1959 there was a mass X-ray inspection at the school. It was found that Mr J. P. Jones had a lung infection. It was TB. Consequently classrooms had to be disinfected and books destroyed. Mr Jones was subsequently absent for 15 months in order to recuperate and Mr Gittins became acting Headmaster. In 1964 Mr Gittins was appointed Headteacher of Talybont County Primary School.

The first Annual Sports were held on the School Playing Field in July 1953. This is the first reference to the school having a playing field. The Pearce Shield (donated by Mr W. J. Pearce) was won by Wagtail House. The Morgan Davies Cups, for the highest number of points scored, were won by Austin Gwillim (for the Lower School) and Alun Evans (for the Upper School). In 1959 Wagtail House again won the Pearce Shield. The Junior Cup (under 10) was won by Rebecca Thomas and the Senior Cup (10+) was won by Anthony Morris. Trophies were presented by Councillor T. I. Watkins, Esq., JP, Chairman of the District Education Committee.

Towards the end of 1957 there was the devastating Asian 'Flu epidemic. It had a huge impact on the attendance at the school, as throughout the rest of the UK. On 27 September attendance was only 88.2%. The log book recorded, "Many children absent with influenza". On 4 October attendance was down to 46.8% - "Influenza Epidemic", records the log book. On 7 October only Mr J. M. Jones was present of the staff, along with just 47 pupils. By 25 October attendance was back up to 94.5%.

The severe winter of 1963 is also recorded in the log book. On 7 January the Headteacher recorded: "School was closed for a further week owing to severe weather conditions and freezing of outside toilets". When school reopened on 16 January only 42 children were present. On 24 January the school was closed due to the freezing of the water mains. On 6 February Mr W. J. Gittins was absent; he was unable to travel from Talybont because the roads were blocked by snowdrifts. The school was closed until Monday 11 February.

By 1961 the number of pupils in Talgarth School was declining and the school was reorganised on a three-class basis. There was sadness in June 1962 when Richard Davies (Class I) was killed in a road accident. Sadly, there was another fatal accident in 1970: on 14 January Martin Carey had gone into the River Ennig, on his way back to school for the afternoon session, to retrieve his ball. The river was in spate and Martin was drowned. His body was recovered the following day.

There had been some exciting news on 25 November 1968 when: "A television was today received in school and installed in the School Canteen. It has been serviced and is now ready for viewing". There was also excitement on 1 July 1969, when the school was closed on the occasion of the Investiture of Charles as Prince of Wales at Caernarfon.

On 23 February 1970 Mr J. P. Jones submitted his resignation, to take effect from 1 September. His successor, Mr L. S. Davies, of Mount Street School, Brecon, was appointed on 14 July 1970.

Mr Davies's first task was to amalgamate with the Infant School. Talgarth School now became 'Talgarth Junior Mixed and Infant School'. On 10 December 1970 the Infants' Christmas Party was held in the School Canteen: "Each child received a small present from Father Christmas". School Prizes were awarded on 14 December, for a Nature Study Competition. The First prize was won jointly by Judith Watkins and Heather Gwilym; and the Second Prize was also won jointly by Martin Vaughan and Christopher Lewis.

Football matches were played against neighbouring schools in 1971: Crickhowell 5-0 Talgarth; Talgarth 6-0 Llandefalle; Talgarth 3-0 Llanfaes. In 1972: Talgarth 3-1 Bronllys. The results of the School Sports in June 1972 were: 1<sup>st</sup> Dulas (179 points), 2<sup>nd</sup> Ennig (171) and 3<sup>rd</sup> Llynfi (109). In 1973, the School Sports were won by Ennig House.

School Visits continued: in 1971, to the Mountain Centre, Libanus; the Barracks Military Museum and the County Museum at Brecon; Dan-yr-ogof Caves; and to Longleat House, Wiltshire. Various classes went on the different excursions but, on the occasion of the visit to Longleat, the school was closed as 89 of the Juniors and 6 staff attended. St Fagan's was visited in 1972 and Bath in 1973. The School staff in 1973 were:

Mr L. S. Davies, H.M.	–	Std. 4
Miss N. Miles, Dep.H.M.	–	Class 3
Mr R. Rowsell, i/c	–	2 <sup>nd</sup> Year Juniors
Mrs E. E. L. Griffiths	–	1 <sup>st</sup> Year Juniors
Mrs S. Cooke	–	2 <sup>nd</sup> Year Juniors
Mrs E. Weale	–	1 <sup>st</sup> Year Infants
Mrs K. J. M. Bartlett	–	Babies
Mrs M. Lawrence	–	3 <sup>rd</sup> Year Juniors

Evidence of yet another reorganisation of education is apparent in 1974. When the school reopened in September, it was recorded in the log book that 36 children had left for Gwernyfed ‘Comprehensive’ School. The former secondary modern school was now a secondary comprehensive school.

### **The old gives way to the new**

Talgarth School now had a roll of 177 and the old school buildings were unsuitable for such large numbers and for modern teaching methods. On 11 October 1974 Mr Robert Bevan, Director of Education for the new unitary County of Powys, visited the school and inspected the “new school building currently under construction”.<sup>45</sup>

On 14 May 1975 the first meeting of the new School Managing Body was held:

Chairman – County Councillor Geoffrey Green, The Orchard, Talgarth  
 Vice-Chair – Mrs C. Jones, BA, Neuaddfach, Talgarth  
 Mrs I. Lewis, Westfields, Talgarth  
 Mrs E. Jones, Churchfields, Talgarth  
 Mr Bryan George, Greenways, Talgarth  
 Mr Philip Morgan, Green Acres, Ty Bryn, Talgarth

On 7 August 1975 the meeting of the Managing Body was held for the first time in the ‘New School’. This brought to an end a very long phase of evolving education in Talgarth, from ‘Voluntary’ beginnings, through the School Board era and into twentieth century control by the LEA. The school was served by some very loyal and long-serving staff and continues to provide effective service for this small market town and its surrounding rural community.

I am most grateful to the Head Teacher of Talgarth School for the loan of the school’s log books, which have provided the information for most of this article.



Fig. 4 Talgarth School after closure.

Photos by the author

<sup>1</sup> The *Atlas Brycheiniog* (1960) was published in Welsh by the Breconshire Education Committee under the leadership of David Lewis (Chairman of the Education Committee) and Deiniol Williams (Chief Education Officer). It comprised 132 pp. and contained many maps and illustrations. A 64 pp. English version, entitled *The Breconshire Atlas* was published simultaneously but without the maps and illustrations. The description of the education system appears on pp. 33–36 in the English version and pp. 76–85 in the Welsh.

<sup>2</sup> Hughes, C. P. F., 'A Study of the Relationship between School Education and Industrial Society', unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of Wales (1991), p. 38.

<sup>3</sup> Trott, A. L., 'The British School Movement in Wales: 1806–1846', *The History of Education in Wales: 1*, Swansea (1978), p. 83.

<sup>4</sup> Fairs, G. L., *Annals of a Parish: A Short History of Hay-on-Wye*, Hay (1994), p. 63.

<sup>5</sup> Seaborne, Malcolm, *Schools in Wales 1500–1900: A Social and Architectural History*, Denbigh (1992), pp. 27 and 39.

<sup>6</sup> Government reports were published in books with blue covers.

<sup>7</sup> *Reports of the Commissioners of Enquiry into the State of Education in Wales*, abridged version, London (1848), p. 239.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 250.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 236.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 260.

<sup>11</sup> Hughes, Colin, 'Radnorshire and the 1847 Reports on Education', *Transactions of the Radnorshire Society*, Vol. LXIII (1993), p. 53.

<sup>12</sup> Morgan, K. O., *Rebirth of a Nation: Wales 1880–1980*, Oxford (1981), p. 23.

<sup>13</sup> Nefydd MS, *National Library of Wales Journal*, Vol. 9 No. 3, Summer 1956, p. 368.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, Vol. 10 No. 1, Summer 1957, p. 112.

<sup>15</sup> Extract from the 1862 Revised Code of Regulations.

<sup>16</sup> See Gregynog Box 17 in the Department of Pictures and Maps, at the National Library of Wales.

<sup>17</sup> Pupils had to pay to attend National and British schools in this 'Voluntary Era': perhaps 3 pence (3d) a week for the oldest child in a family and 2 pence (2d) for the next child and 1 pence (1d) for the youngest – hence the term 'school pence'.

<sup>18</sup> Talgarth British School Log Book No. 1 (1863–1882), entry dated 21 April 1864.

<sup>19</sup> Critical comments like this are very common in school log books when a new teacher takes charge of a school; it makes one think that the new teacher can then claim to have improved the school!

<sup>20</sup> Log Book, op. cit., entry for 18 September 1866.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 16 April 1869.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 12 January 1872.

<sup>23</sup> To continue to gain government grant, the schools had to achieve certain standards, including high attendance, in the examination that was sat when HMI inspected the school.

<sup>24</sup> Log Book, op. cit., entry for 6 October 1868.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, 1 December 1868.

<sup>26</sup> This did happen, in 1878.

<sup>27</sup> The Voluntary schools were unable to cope with the growing school population, so more schools were needed. Board schools would be run by School Boards, assisted with government money. Voluntary schools could apply to become Board Schools, if they so wished.

<sup>28</sup> This was duly opened in September 1877.

<sup>29</sup> Log Book, op. cit., entry for 7 July 1876.

<sup>30</sup> See: Evans, L. W., *Education in Industrial Wales, 1700–1900*, Cardiff (1971), Chapter X.

<sup>31</sup> Talgarth Infant School Log Book No. 1 (1878–1914), entry for 22 March 1878.

<sup>32</sup> Talgarth Council School Mixed Department Log Book No. 2 (1882–1900), entry for 21 September 1885.

<sup>33</sup> See: Hughes, Dr Colin P. F., *Builth Wells High School: A Centenary History, 1896–1996*, Builth Wells (1996).

<sup>34</sup> Talgarth Council School Mixed Department Log Book No. 3 (1900–1915), entry for 16 March 1906.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, entry for 3 March 1911.

<sup>36</sup> The flag-pole had originally been erected to commemorate Empire Day.

<sup>37</sup> Log Book No. 3, entry for 21 May 1915.

<sup>38</sup> Talgarth Mixed Council School Log Book No. 4 (1915–1931), entry for 2 March 1917.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, entry for 23 November 1917.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, entry for 30 July 1920.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, entry for 6 February 1931.

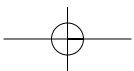
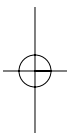
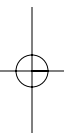
<sup>42</sup> Talgarth Mixed Council School Log Book No. 5 (1931–1949), entry for 30 September 1938.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, entry for 12 July 1944.

<sup>44</sup> Talgarth County Primary School log Book No. 6 (1949–1975), entry for 5 June 1950.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, entry for 11 October 1975.

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## BELGIAN REFUGEES IN YSTRADGYNLAIS IN THE GREAT WAR<sup>1</sup>

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Most photographs of refugees then, as now, depict the psychological distress, weariness and fear created by displacement through war. At first sight, then, this postcard is something of a surprise. What are these people doing appearing in their (or somebody else's loaned) Sunday best having their portrait taken at Ystradgynlais's premier photographic studio of William Cartwright? And why was the resulting photograph then to be sold as a picture postcard? The weekly issues of the local newspaper *Llais Llafur* hold the key.<sup>2</sup> *Llais Llafur* (Labour Voice) was published in Ystalyfera but covered the surrounding industrial districts of Glamorganshire, Carmarthenshire and Brecknock. Each issue included local intelligence from such communities as Ystalyfera, Pontardawe, Alltwen, Ystradgynlais, Dulais Valley, Seven Sisters, Abercrave, Colbren, Clydach, Crynant, Brynamman, Cwmllynfell and Cwmtwrch. Its pages offer a particular perspective on how the influx of refugees during the Great War was viewed and dealt with in these places.<sup>3</sup>



Fig. 1 Postcard showing the Belgian refugees.

Perhaps as many as 250,000 Belgian refugees were received into Britain following the German invasion of Belgium in August 1914. In London a War Refugees Committee was established at Aldwych to liaise with country-wide local committees that were hastily set up to operate under the Urban and Rural District Councils. These committees found places for the refugees to reside in their localities, oversaw their well-being in the community and managed the funds for their relief. The local newspapers were an important instrument to marshal commitment and involvement from the populace.

In September, under the heading “Safe Home in Wales”, the first Belgian refugees were reported as being “sympathetically and warmly received” already into Milford Haven, Neath and Swansea.<sup>4</sup> The following weeks the newspaper included articles justifying the war and reporting first-hand accounts of the atrocities the Germans had meted out to the fleeing Belgians. On 3 October, under “The Plight of the Refugees” the Independent Labour Party MP (for a Glasgow constituency) George Nicholl Barnes described his visit to one of the camps at Alexandra Palace observing “. . . the human wreckage of the refugees. Louvain and even Reims may be rebuilt, but the tragedy, of the poor peasants is final.” Following graphic descriptions of particular cases he asked

WHO WILL OFFER? There are 3,000 of these poor creatures at the palace. It is not intended as a permanent resting-place for them, but rather as a clearing-house through which to pass them on to the houses of those who are offering hospitality. The emergency committee and the Catholic community of London are doing splendid work in sorting out the refugees and passing them on after rest and recuperation. The stay of each party averages about four days, and they will pass out, of course greatly improved to their new homes . . . This provision of an abiding-place for the poor Belgians is one of the best things which has yet been done by the Government since the beginning of the war. It will remain after the heat and horror of killing as one of the sweet memories of a ghastly time.

*Llais Llafur* took up the issue and three weeks later (24 October) hit its readership with:

WAR AND NATIONAL WEAKNESSES. There are now about one thousand Belgian refugees in South Wales. That is not a very handsome total for a prosperous community such as ours. Many parts of South Wales are better off, financially, than in time of peace, although there are districts where unemployment and under-employment are rife. There is no lack of sympathy with the Belgians; indeed it would be true to say that nowhere in the British Isles is readier homage paid to their heroism than in South Wales. Why then is so little being done for these brave souls who have sacrificed their homes and their happiness, rather than yield to the Prussian bullies? The answer lies in the chronic lack of public spirit in Wales. We have no lack of politicians, but there are no social workers. There are plenty of Liberals, Tories, and I.L.P.-ers who take an active and continuous interest in politics, but seemingly, there

are few willing or able to organise public feeling to practical ends. The Tory Churchmen are busy sneering at their brother Christians, the Nonconformists, for their alleged luke-warmness towards recruiting; the Nonconformist leaders are concerning themselves with the momentous question whether Tommy Atkins should be deprived of his beer; and many of the I.L.P. are content to indulge in futile grumbling at the diplomacy of Sir Edward Grey.<sup>5</sup> The Liberals jeer at the Tories; the Tories gibe at the Liberals; and the I.L.P. slang both—that sums up political life in Wales. It's a long, long way that we have to travel before our national life manifests anything like a sensitive and disciplined social conscience.

This was slightly disingenuous of the newspaper, for elsewhere in the same issue it reports the arrival of a batch of seven refugees at Seven Sisters through the Neath Relief Committee and the previous Monday (19 October) a special conference drawn from surrounding districts had taken place at Pontardawe to consider their own responses to the call to “render local succour” to the Belgian refugees. So, by mid October even the smallest towns and villages had rallied and were setting up committees – if only to provide hospitality for a couple of families.

Much of the impetus came from the pulpit and the Ystradgynlais committee was chaired by the rector, Rev James Jones (with Mr Thomas Williams as secretary and Mr W. Davies as treasurer). Rather than take refugees into individuals' homes it was felt easier to rent houses for them so that the whole community could then be encouraged to finance the scheme.<sup>6</sup> The money would be collected through regular giving at local churches and chapels, which, when the accounts for the first year were published in November 1915, had reached eleven in number.<sup>7</sup> It was decided that “about a dozen refugees” could be accommodated.<sup>8</sup>

The following week's issue of *Llais Llafur* (31 October 1914) now showed an editorial softening of heart but reminded its readers of the two nations' similarity:

It is good to see the leaders of public life in the Swansea Valley bestirring themselves on behalf of the Belgian refugees. We owe much to them, more than we can ever repay and we are bound in honour and duty to do what we can in the way of hospitality to those who have been driven from their homes by the Prussian bully. Wales has a peculiar affinity with Belgium. Like ourselves she is a small bilingual nation. There is a close racial link between the Welsh and the Flemings and Walloons. As in Wales, the love of political freedom is the strongest trait of the national character.<sup>9</sup>

The communities needed no reminding that they already included several generations of Belgians, their skilled ancestors having been drawn to the region by the spelter and tinplate works. At the outbreak of war, some of these men had even left to volunteer for the Belgian Army.

In what seems almost to have been a sense of competition, the various chapels and churches wanted their members' contributions to be openly declared in the same sort of way that voluntary recruitment to the forces (before conscription started) was being made public through Rolls of Honour displayed at each place of worship. Such competitiveness stretched to the workplace; following a meeting of the Pontardawe No 2 Steel Smelters' Union it was suggested that members already pledged to contribute through their church/chapel fund should consider transferring their giving to the Trade Union fund "in order to show that organised workers were ready and willing to support the refugees".<sup>10</sup>

The Government's central committee paid the cost of the refugees' train fares from the London detention centres to their allocated destinations but thereafter all costs had to be borne by the local committees. The batch of ten allocated to Ystradgynlais arrived at Swansea High Street station at 4pm on Tuesday 20 October. The Swansea routine was for them to be entertained in Swansea at the Mackworth Hotel (paid for by an identified local benefactor, in this case Mr & Mrs G. H. Strick of Cefneithen) before being bussed to their sponsoring destination. At Ystradgynlais our party is said to have been welcomed by a crowd of about 2,000 stretching from the Ynyscedwyn Arms to the house made available for them at number 2 Gladstone Terrace, Brecon Road, which had been tastefully and comfortably furnished from voluntary contributions. By the time they stepped off Mr W. J. Jones's saloon bus (kindly lent for the occasion) the refugees were already in tears at such charity.<sup>11</sup>

Over the ensuing months the paper continued to report something of what the Ystradgynlais group got up to – from being inundated with well-wishing callers, to shopping expeditions and attending functions held in their honour. The Thursday after their arrival they were guests at a benefit given in the New Cinema where photographs of the war zone were projected and a collection made in aid of the county refugee fund. Two weeks later the men of the group attended the annual dinner of the newly-formed Ystradgynlais Agricultural Society at the Mason's Arms. One of the group was even drawn to contribute a speech in Flemish which was interpreted for the 120 locals present by Mr W. D. Jeffreys who answered to the Bardic name Jeffre Goch; the toast to the King was extended to include the King of Belgium.<sup>12</sup>

My card with the studio portrait of the refugees is postmarked 18 December 1914 and must surely result from the occasion of the special concert held for their entertainment at the Non-Political Club on Saturday 12 December which was reported in the 19 December issue of *Llais Llafur*.

During the evening, the refugees were made the recipients of a cheque presented on behalf of the members of the club, by Dr. E. Walsh, who presided. The programme, which was greatly appreciated, was as follows: Song, "Lightman Tom." by Mr J.

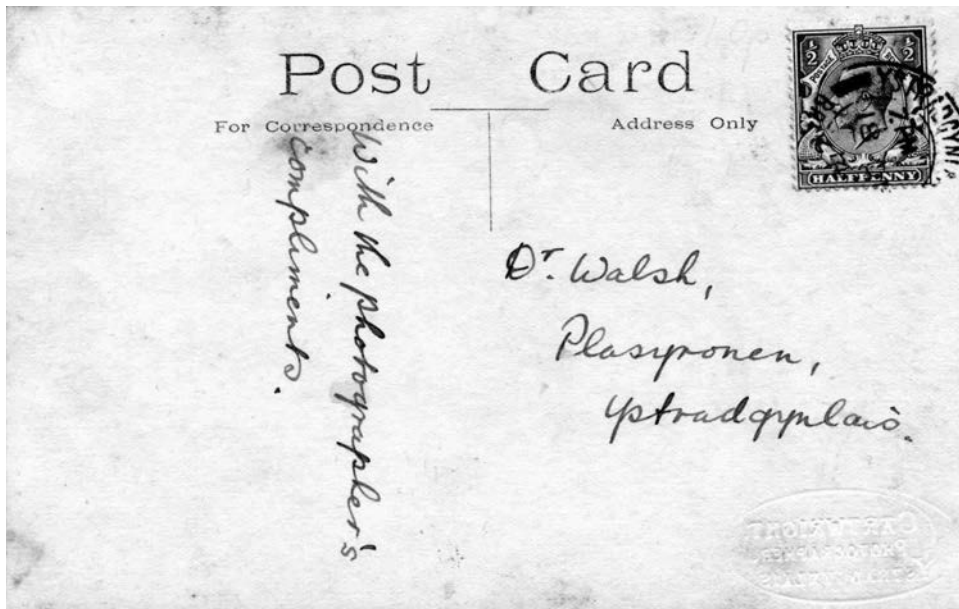


Fig. 2 Reverse of postcard showing the Belgian refugees.

Wilkins; recital, Mr Tom Davies (Mardy Bard): the song, "Yes, let me like a soldier fall," by Mr Arthur B. Davies "brought the house down," and he had to re-appear, when he sang "Llwybr yr Wyddfa." Mr Ernest Aubrey gave a whistling solo; Mr Morgan Morgan Morgan sang "Kaiser Bill"; Mr Llew. Williams gave an accordion solo; Mr Hy. Hyons sang "Ave Maria"; Mr W. D. Jeffreys, "Tipperary"; Mr S. Bailey gave the recital, "The Day"; Mr Rees Phillips, Cwmtwrch, gave a pianoforte solo, "National Airs." The rendering of "Hen Wlad fy Nhadau" brought a memorable evening to a close.

Dr Edmond Walsh was Medical Officer of Health for Ystradgynlais Rural District Council so he naturally took an interest in how the refugees were faring. The photograph may well have been taken at his instigation to show how the refugees in his charge had been rehabilitated into their new temporary life. The following week it was reported that:

We have received from Mr Cartwright, the popular Ystradgynlais photographer, a capital picture postcard of the Belgian refugees now in Ystradgynlais. It is a remarkably faithful likeness of every one, and the refugees are delighted with it. We learn that the cards are on sale at the establishment of Mr C. D. Lake.

C. D. Lake was not only the local newsagent and tobacconist but also a printer and publisher who published his own machine-printed picture postcards of the

village. During the war his shop window included displays of photographs and souvenirs brought back by serving soldiers whilst his advertisements underlined that fact that he was a tobacconist.<sup>13</sup> Cartwright's postcard was a real photograph and that batch would have been produced by the photographer in the dark room; it also bears Cartwright's blindstamp. How many were printed and how many were sold is not known – an unused copy appeared at a Birmingham Auction in February 2014.

The ten refugees were from Liege, and the neighbourhood of Malines and Louvain. The newspaper for 31 October gives their names as M. Francis Adams, his son and daughter-in-law, M. Leopold and Mme. Marie Adams, Mlle. Marie de Keyser, M. and Mme. Leemans and their little son, and Mme. Vrebosch and her two daughters. There is an obvious discrepancy between this description and the figures in the December photograph since, although totalling ten, the photograph shows five women, four men and the boy (although later newspaper accounts describe the Leemans child as a girl). The men had all left good positions in Belgium, "one of them having been in the Civil Service." Later accounts also mention M. Toursaint Lebe as one of the group. He left in December to join the Belgian Army (which had previously rejected him on grounds of age) while M. Leemans, who until the outbreak of war had worked in the Post Office in Bruxelles, left to work in the Military Postal Service. In April Mme. Leemans and their child left to join him in London.<sup>14</sup>

In December 1914 the national Departmental Committee presented its first report on how best to find employment for Belgian refugees. Recommendations were mainly of an organisational nature with some direction to potential employers. For example, if a refugee was unmarried, of military age and physically fit then no job in the mines or metal industries was to be made available. Local evidence given to the Committee by Councillor Gwynne of Swansea stated that business in the tinsplate trade, which had been slack, was improving so, in view of the higher rates of wages in that industry, new jobs were likely to attract speltermen from their present employment leaving vacancies at spelter works which could then be given to Belgians.<sup>15</sup> It was clear that refugees should not be given the better jobs if a Briton was available to take it. The report resulted in an editorial comment in the guise of a letter to the editor a fortnight later, "if idleness is a bad thing for the Belgians it is not a good thing for Britons. If it is the duty of the Government to relieve unemployment among Belgians it is equally their duty to provide every Briton with work . . . after the war there will be a great deal of unemployment, and we Labour men must see that the Government then in power does not repudiate the principle they have adopted in the case of the Belgians"<sup>16</sup> A year later the South Wales Miners Federation meeting approved admittance of refugees into their

membership free of joining fees but made the point that no refugee could work underground “unless they knew the language”.<sup>17</sup>

The refugee conference in Pontardawe in April 1915 was able to record the numbers of refugees being supported by each local committee:

Pontardawe	20
Gwauncaegurwen	13
Ystalyfera	21
Upper and Lower Brynamman	11
Ammanford	18
Cwmtwrch	6
Ystradgynlais	10
Clydach	31
Cwmllynfell	17
Total of	147

Even *Llais Llafur* could not report charitable success everywhere. It reported on activities of the refugees in all the local communities but on 29 May 1915 the following appeared under “Dulais Valley Chat”:

MAN’S INGRATITUDE. The local Belgian refugees have now left the place, having taken their departure on Saturday. Judging by the ungrateful remarks made by some of them it would appear that Seven Sisters had not been fortunate in the class of refugees sent there. But it is safe to prophesy that they will go further and fare worse. In spite of this experience, it is to be hoped that the good people of the Seven will not allow this experience to dry up the fountains of their charity. Let them follow the example of other local committees (notably Ystalyfera) and forward their subscriptions to the National Belgian Relief Committee. Because of a few grasping and ungrateful Belgians we should not forget our obligations to the Belgian nation, two millions of whom are totally dependent on charity for the bare wherewithal to keep life.

Our ten at Ystradgynlais were supported by regular giving from members of the following congregations: Moriah, Peniel, Brynawel, Calfaria, Roman Catholic, Aion, Parish Church, Sardis, Tabernacle, Cwmgiedd (Yorath Chapel), English Congregational.

The Refugee Fund was not the only one into which those at home were being emotionally encouraged to pay. There was also the Tobacco Fund for soldiers at the front and in July 1915 the Dulais Valley Chamber of Trade proposed another “Patriotic Fund”. By contributing to this fund they were going to present each man that “had joined the colours”, upon his return, with a “patriotic” watch, valued three guineas. *Llais Llafur* commented through a thinly veiled letter to the Editor and poured water over this suggestion, concluding with “It is all right to wax patriotic when the workman pays. If the Chamber of Trade has a desire to be patriotic, let them pay the price the workmen pay for

theirs".<sup>18</sup> By 1917 when the indigenous population were really feeling the pinch, some resentment did cause the paper to publish letters seeking to induce the remaining unemployed refugees to take up work that would assist in their upkeep. "Although local families were suffering during the closing down of the collieries, collectors were still calling on behalf of the Refugee Fund."<sup>19</sup> This must have been a problem to many who had signed up to give a regular donation, little knowing how long the war was going to last and how their circumstances were going to change.

One of the Vrebosch sisters clearly made her mark in employment as a VAD (Voluntary Aid Detachment) nurse in the local hospital. *Llais Llafur* reported on 15 February 1919:

A presentation and farewell supper was held at Glanrhyd hospital on Tuesday evening in honour of Nurse Valentine Freybosh, one of the Ystradgynlais Belgian refugees, who left the hospital on Wednesday preparatory to sailing for Belgium on Saturday. On behalf of the patients, Lance-Corpl. Duckham presented Nurse Freybosh with a handbag, whilst Nurse Bowen gave an autograph album on behalf of the V.A.D.s.

Games, dancing, etc., were afterwards indulged in, and a miscellaneous programme given when Pte. Burton and Miss Ethel Bibbs recited, and Miss Gwynneth Jones sang, whilst Nurse Chatham and Pte. Burton gave a duet. The gathering terminated with the singing of "Auld Lang Syne." Nurse Freybosh leaves for her native land with the best wishes of the people of the Valley.

With the war ended, most refugees were keen to return and re-establish homes in their mother country. For those in the Swansea Vale a special train left Swansea on 17 March to transport them directly to Tilbury docks. The remaining five Ystradgynlais refugees were in that party. The newspaper published their letter:

We are glad to tell you that we are going back to Belgium, to our native land; but before leaving Ystradgynlais we wish to thank you from the bottom of our hearts for all you have done for us, and all the kindness you have shown us, and not only in the beginning but until the very end of our stay. We shall never forget you, and shall be grateful all our lives. Good-bye, dear friends of Ystradgynlais, goodbye, and we hope to see some of you, at any rate, in Belgium. You would be very welcome all of you. With love and good wishes dear friends, our farewell. Marie de Keyser, Mr and Mrs Adams. Mrs and Miss Vrebosh 2, Gladstone-terr., Ystradgynlais.<sup>20</sup>

In April the local committees were wound up and all celebrated with a social evening, deservedly congratulating themselves for their efforts of the previous four and a half years.<sup>21</sup>



### Postscript – a conscientious objector

William Cartwright's teenage son Wallace helped him out at the photographic studio while earning 18s a week as a cinema violinist at Edwards and Page's New Cinema. He was also a sought-after soloist performer for concerts in the wider area. When aged 18 he got his call-up papers and in May 1917 he pleaded exemption on conscientious grounds.<sup>22</sup>

Exemption was initially granted but the military appealed and at the Breconshire tribunal in June the exemption was overturned. This tribunal was given wide publicity and verbatim accounts were included not only in *Llais Llafur* but in the *Brecon & Radnor Express* and the *Brecon County Times*.<sup>23</sup> It was seen as a test case with the military suggesting the boy's objection was sponsored by the Independent Labour Party in which his father was a prominent local member.

In spite of his objection being rejected, Cartwright continued to refuse "to don khaki". In July he was arrested as an absentee and at the police court was handed over to the military and escorted to Brecon. From there he was sent to Abergele where "he remained unaltered in his attitude". He was then returned to Brecon and court martialled for refusing to submit to a medical examination. On 27 September the newspapers reported "Wallace Cartwright, who was sentenced by Court Martial to six months' hard labour for refusing to obey military orders (having served eight weeks of his sentence with good conduct) has been allowed to write a letter to his parents."<sup>24</sup>

Meanwhile Wallace's father, who had taken the photograph of the Belgian refugees, set out in earnest to himself publish picture postcards at Ystradgynlais by advertising "Cartwright's POSTCARDS are quite a different thing to the cheap-jack rubbish you get in large towns."<sup>25</sup>

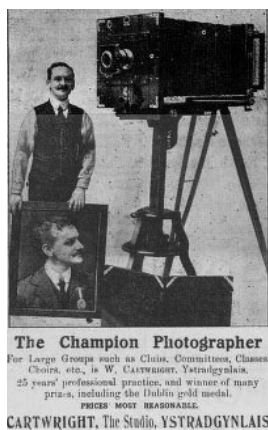


Fig. 3 William Cartwright's advertisement, showing camera.

**Notes**

<sup>1</sup> This article is the result of research into the circumstances surrounding publication of a picture postcard entitled “The Belgian Refugees now staying in Ystradgynlais”. It is an expanded version of a piece in the summer 2014 special issue of *Cardtalk*, published by the South Wales Postcard Club, which was devoted to the Great War.

<sup>2</sup> I am grateful to Dr John Alban for drawing my attention to this resource. See also Alban, J. R. ‘The Activities of the Swansea Belgian Refugees Committee 1914–16’, *Gower* Vol. 26 (1975) pp. 81–4.

<sup>3</sup> I have accessed its pages in June 2014 through the National Library of Wales’ site <http://papuraunewyddcymru.llgc.org.uk/>. By 1914 the majority of the content of *Llais Llafur* is in the English language.

<sup>4</sup> *Llais Llafur* 19 September 1914.

<sup>5</sup> Sir Edward Grey had been Foreign Secretary since 1905 and is best remembered for his comment said to have been made at the outbreak of the war: “The lamps are going out all over Europe, we shall not see them lit again in our life-time”.

<sup>6</sup> Some committees found willing benefactors to provide houses free of charge. Examples were at Pontardawe, Crynant and Ystalyfera (*Llais Llafur* 31 October 1914, 14 November 1914 and 2 January 1915).

<sup>7</sup> *Llais Llafur* 25 December 1915.

<sup>8</sup> *Brecon & Radnor Express* 29 October 1914.

<sup>9</sup> *Llais Llafur* 31 October 1914.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.* 7 November 1914.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.* 31 October 1914.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.* 14 Nov 1914.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.* 25 August 1917.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.* 17 April 1915.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.* 2 January 1915.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.* 16 January 1915.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.* 4 December 1915.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.* 31 July 1915.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.* 5 May, 17 November 1917.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.* 8 and 22 March 1919.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.* 12 April 1919.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.* 19 May 1917.

<sup>23</sup> *Llais Llafur* 30 June 1917, *Brecon & Radnor Express* 28 June 1917 and *Brecon County Times* 28 June 1917.

<sup>24</sup> *Llais Llafur* 14 and 21 July 1917, *Brecon & Radnor Express* 19 July, 26 July and 27 September 1917.

<sup>25</sup> *Llais Llafur* 17 August 1918.

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“IN PRAISE OF HYWEL AP GORONWY” –  
AN INAUGURATION POEM FOR A KING OF BRYCHEINIOG?

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Hywel ap Goronwy was a prince of the ruling house of Buellt (Builth) in the kingdom of Rhwng Gwy a Hafren (“Between Wye and Severn”). He attacked Pembroke and Dyfed in the Welsh revolt of 1096 and was given Ystrad Tywi (with Cydweli and Gower) by Henry I in 1102. In 1106, he was betrayed by Gwgan ap Meurig, the foster-father of one of his sons<sup>1</sup> and murdered by the Norman garrison of the castle of Rhyd-y-gors near Carmarthen.<sup>2</sup>

The poem (known in Welsh as *Mawl Hywel ap Goronwy*) is preserved in the Black Book of Carmarthen which dates to the period c. 1250.<sup>3</sup> However, there have been various theories regarding the date of its original composition. Some have opted for the period between 1102 and 1105,<sup>4</sup> whilst others have suggested the brief period of Welsh ascendancy after the widespread revolt of 1096.<sup>5</sup> During the revolt, Hywel’s cousins, Gruffudd and Ifor ab Idnerth, destroyed a Norman army sent from Glamorgan to raid Brycheiniog. It has been suggested that Hywel took advantage of this situation to claim the kingship of Brycheiniog and that this poem may be his inauguration ode.<sup>6</sup> However, the most likely scenario is that the poem was composed in 1101, the year of the death of Hywel’s father and the most probable occasion of his ascension to power in Brycheiniog.<sup>7</sup> This means that *Mawl Hywel ap Goronwy* is possibly the earliest surviving court poem of the *Gogynfeirdd*.<sup>8</sup>

The poem opens with a prayer to God to lend his support to Hywel who is a proud king, fierce in battle and strong in defence (1–6):

Duw yn gymorth,	yn nerth, yn borth,	yn ganhorthwy
I falch dëyrn,	dinas unbyn,	dengyn adwy:
Hywel fal môr,	Cymru oror,	cyngor Arwy,
Terrwyn drochiad,	torfoedd feiddad,	fab Goronwy.
Godrudd ei fâr,	gwrdd yn nhrydar:	gwaë ry’i cothwy!

“May God be help, strength, support, assistance  
To a proud king, the refuge of lords, a strong man defending the pass:  
Hywel like the sea, the defence of the Welsh, his counsel wise like Garwy’s,  
Fierce stabber, challenger of hosts, son of Goronwy,  
Impetuous in anger, mighty in conflict, woe betide those who provoke him!”

Declaring Hywel’s right to Brycheiniog, the poet then lists a whole range of territories supposedly subservient to him. As this list includes large swathes of the whole of Wales, we must accept this as poetic hyperbole – it is very

unlikely that all of the places mentioned were in his power. More locally, however, several areas are named that may have come under his influence as king of Brycheiniog (7–10):

Tir Brycheinawg	dy iawn priawd:	pawb a'i gwelwy.
Neu ryddadlas	am lwyth eurwas	Euas lywy,
Erging anchwant,	Gwent, Gwlad Morgant, Dyffryn Mynwy,	
Gŵyr Benrhyn,	Ystradwy fryn,	Tywyn warwy,

“The land of Brycheiniog is your true birthright, may all see it.  
He has gathered around the people of the excellent man Ewias fair as a maiden,  
Pleasant Ergyng, Gwent, Glamorgan, the Monnow Valley;  
The Gower peninsula, the hill of Ystradwy, pleasant Tywyn,”

Some have seen *Ystradwy* as a reference to Stradey Hill near Llanelli (Andrews 2007, 45), though it is much more likely to refer to *Ystrad Yw*, the comote that included Bwlch, Crickhowell and the Grwyne valley.<sup>9</sup>

Rather than enumerating Hywel's territorial claims, it seems much more likely that list reflects the representatives from many parts of Wales who attended a ceremony in which Hywel's rule was proclaimed and that *Maowl Hywel ap Goronwyy* is, indeed, an inauguration ode.<sup>10</sup> As such, the poet is greatly concerned to emphasise the royal status of his patron. He addresses him as [b]alch dëyrn (“proud king”) (l.2), *gwrawol frenin* (“valiant king”) (l. 23) and *gwledig* (“king”) (l. 21). The term *gwledig* implies royal ancestry as well as any current political status.<sup>11</sup> The poet emphasises the point by naming Hywel's royal ancestors (particularly kings of Gwent and Glamorgan) and sings of his sovereignty (l. 26):

Bei na chaned	ei dëyrned	anhued rwy!
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Were his sovereignty not praised in song, it would be excessive audacity . . .

The terms *prïod* and *prïodawr* used in lines 7 and 39 relate to a man who has legitimately succeeded to a kingdom by virtue of the death of his father.<sup>12</sup> Hywel's kingly status is emphasised again towards the end of the poem – he is called *brenin* and *rhi* (ll. 40–1) and the poem ends with wishes for a long life, riches, fame and progeny. The poet thus addresses Hywel with all four terms current c. 1100 for “king”, namely *rhi*, *gwledig*, *brenin* and *tëyrn*, but does not address him with the terms for an over-king or superior king *mechdëyrn* and *pen rhiau*. Presumably, these titles have yet to be earned by him.<sup>13</sup>

Despite this emphasis on his royal status, Hywel actually represented an intrusive dynasty. His uncle, Llywelyn ap Cadwgan, and father, Hywel ap Cadwgan, had asserted their power over Brycheiniog after having been driven out of Buellt by Philip de Briouze. In 1099, Llywelyn was killed by “the men of Brycheiniog”.<sup>14</sup> Hywel's position was never secure and the opposition mentioned in lines 27–8 may have been from within Brycheiniog itself.<sup>15</sup>

“*In Praise of Hywel ap Goronwy*” – an inauguration poem for a king of Brycheiniog? 149

The last native king of Brycheiniog is recorded in the 10<sup>th</sup> century. The kingdom then possibly fell under the sway of the kings of Gwent and Glamorgan. This may be the point of the references to Edwin ap Gwriad of Gwent (l. 23) and Meurig ap Hywel of Glamorgan (l. 43).<sup>16</sup> Indeed some have seen the main purpose of the poem as exhorting Hywel to claim his rightful place as ruler over Glamorgan and Gwent.<sup>17</sup> If Hywel ap Goronwy could show descent from the kings of Gwent and Glamorgan (possibly through his mother) this may have strengthened his claim to Brycheiniog.<sup>18</sup> His reign was short-lived and it is possible that Henry I gave Hywel Ystrad Tywi, Cydweli and Gower in 1102 in recompense for ceding Brycheiniog to Bernard de Neufmarché.<sup>19</sup>

Accepting the poem as a genuine inauguration ode has important implications for our understanding of the governance of Early Medieval Brycheiniog. In AD 934, Tewdwr ab Elisedd attended the court of Athelstan at Winchester and witnessed a charter as *subregulus* and this is the last explicit reference to the kings of Brycheiniog.<sup>20</sup> However, if Hywel ap Goronwy was able to lay claim to kingly sovereignty in 1101, this may imply the survival of the concept of native kingship in Brycheiniog after the early 10th century and, possibly, down to the end of the 11<sup>th</sup> century.

**Mawl Hywel ap Goronwy (“In Praise of Hywel ap Goronwy”)**

This translation is based on the edition and rendering into modern Welsh by R. Geraint Gruffydd (1994). I am also grateful to Dr Nerys Ann Jones for generously allowing me access to her forthcoming edition and modern Welsh version ahead of publication and for her suggestions for amendments to the translation. I am also grateful to Dr David Stephenson for his generous help and invaluable comments. Gruffydd’s Welsh text, in modern orthography, is given below.

- 1 May God be help, strength, support, assistance  
To a proud king, the refuge of lords, a strong man defending the pass:  
Hywel like the sea, the defence of the Welsh, his counsel wise like Garwy’s,  
Fierce stabber, challenger of hosts, son of Goronwy,
- 5 Cruel in anger, mighty in conflict, woe betide those who provoke him!  
Powerful sun, who spends freely in his exalted circuit.  
The land of Brycheiniog is your true birthright, may all see it.  
There is gathered around the people of the excellent man Ewias fair as a maiden,  
Pleasant Eryng, Gwent, Glamorgan, the Monnow Valley;
- 10 The Gower peninsula, the hill of Ystradwy, pleasant Tywyn,  
Dyfed of double distinction, Ceredigion, a thorough visitation  
And Meironnydd and Eifionydd and Ardudwy  
And far Llŷn and Aberffraw and Degannwy,  
Rhos, Rhufoniog – excellent company – swift is his mastery over them;
- 15 The region of Tegeingl, Edeirnion, Iâl, a vigorous preparation

- For immediate war, and the vale of Clwyd and Nant Conwy,  
Renowned Powys and Cyfeiliog and greater still than that:  
The Severn Valley, Ceri, Breiddin, a splendid place,  
Elfael, Builth, Maelienydd (better still); far may he travel:
- 20 To the three Adjacent Islands and the Three Islands and the lands overseas.  
King Hywel, may a lord victorious in battle give you hostages  
In your presence, supreme lord, sprung from the children of Nefwy,  
Great-grandson of Edwin, valliant king, of bright charm,  
Fierce dragon-lord, like the roar of stormy seas, may he sieze abundance,
- 25 The champion has worn on his fingers a golden ring,  
Were his sovereignty not praised in song, it would be excessive audacity.  
Of the many lords who seek there to conspire in oppression,  
Hywel boldly drives them away, he is better than them,  
They fear him, they scatter before his blows,
- 30 Doubtless to them shall come tribulation, hardship in battle, painful chastisement,  
A grave for their followers, after sickness, disease and affliction,  
No physician shall come, to the ends of the earth, where he holds sway.  
Hywel most generous, great lord, may he overcome,  
Hywel shall have, fitting his brilliance, my blessing.
- 35 My blessing on the pillar of gift-giving, perfect praise,  
The fierce man of war, the equal of Urien, his nature ferocious in battle,  
Fury of the deep sea, fearless nature, sustainer of a hundred thousand,  
The stout door that protects lanterns, anchor of hosts, manly protector of privilege,  
Handsome lord, rightful ruler, leader of every host,
- 40 The most illustrious king from the west to London  
Most generous, most bountiful; bravest, loveliest of the children of Adam,  
The chieftain of worthy men, the earnest expectation of warriors, provider of  
drunkenness like at Badon.  
Great-grandson of Meurig, mighty rampart, of excessive bravery,  
Fierce for land, king of just laws, of the lineage of Morgan,
- 45 Of Glamorgan, of Brecknock, blessed with generosity,  
Of Teyrnnon, with the courage of Leon, ravager of enemies,  
May he give the pleasure of fine food to all the guests of the world, sustainer of  
the stag-hound bitches,  
May he have a long life and heaven and a fair dwelling-place of honour,  
Praise be to him, blessing and wealth, fame and progeny!

## Welsh Text:

	Duw yn gymorth,	yn nerth, yn borth,	yn ganhorthwy
	I falch dēyrn,	dinas unbyn,	dengyn adwy:
	Hywel fal môr,	Cymru oror,	cyingor Arwy,
	Terrwyn drochiad,	torfoedd feiddad,	fab Goronwy.
5	Godrudd ei fâr,	gwrdd yn nhrydar:	gwae ry'i cothwy!
	Pedrydawg haul,	mwyaf ei draul,	uchel gylchwy.

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	Tir Brycheinawg	dy iawn priawd:	pawb a'i gwelwy.
	Neu ryddadlas	am lwyth eurwas	Euas lywy,
	Erging anchwant,	Gwent, Gwlad Morgant, Dyffryn Mynwy,	Tywyn warwy,
10	Gŵyr Benrhyn,	Ystradwy fryn,	cyflawn ofwy,
	Dyfed ddwygawn,	Ceredigiawn,	ac Ardudwy
	A Meironnydd	ac Efionydd	a Dygannwy,
	A Llëyn draw	ac Aberffraw	rhugl yng ngorddwy,
	Rhos, Rhofyniawg,	rhan ardderchawg,	arial arlwy
15	Tegeingl ardal,	Edeirnawn, Iâl,	a Nant Conwy,
	Rhyfel ebrwydd,	a Dyffryn Clwydd	ac a fo mwy:
	Powys enwawg	a Chyfeilawg	cywen fenwy,
	Dyffryn Hafren,	Ceri, Dygen,	(pell y treithwy)
	Elfael, Buell,	Maelenydd gwell	a'r tramordwy:
20	Tair Rhagynys	a'r Tair Ynys	id y gwystlwy!
	Hywel wledig,	udd gweithfuddig,	o blant Nefwy,
	I'th argyfair,	arbennig bair	dilyfn ddenwy,
	Gorwyr Edwin,	gwrawl frenin,	maint achupwy.
	Draig angerddawl,	twrf moroedd mawr,	aur amaerwy.
25	Rhywisgwys llawr	am ei fysawr	anhyed rwy!
	Bei na chaned	ei deyrned	arfaeth camrwy
	O'r sawl pennaeth	Hywel o bell:	gwell yw no hwy!
	Hydr y cymell	dyysgarant	rhag ei ddibwy.
30	Diau uddudd	trallawd, cystudd	a chur cystwy,
	Gwerin weryd,	gwedy clefyd,	cryd a chymwy.
	Ni ddaw meddyg	hyd orffen byd	hyd y notwy.
	Hywel haelaf,	fawr eilasaf,	goresgynnwy.
	Caffawd Hywel,	wrth ei hoywedd,	fy rhybuchwy.
35	Fy rhybuched	i golofn ced,	clod pedrydant,
	Rhyfel ddywal,	Urien hafal,	arial wythaint,
	Gwrŷs gweilgi ddofn,	cywyd eofn,	colofn milcant,
	Llugyrn dewdor,	lluoedd angor,	g r bangor braint,
	Prydus berchen,	priodawr ben,	pen pob cynfaint,
40	Gorau brenin	o'r gollewin	hyd yn Llundaint,
	Haelaf, lariaf,	lewaf, tecaf	o Addaf blant,
	Gwerling haeddon,	gwawdd feiddiadon,	Faddon feddwaint,
	Gorwyr mennig,	mur gwyrennig,	gwryd gormant,
	Terrwyn am dir,	rhi rhaith cywir	o hil Morgant,
45	O Forgannwg,	o Rieinwg	rhadau rhwyddaint,
	O Deyrnon,	cywryd Lleon,	galon reibaint:
	Un fid fenwyd	i ellysb byd	gelleist borthant.
	Hoeddl hir a nef	a chain addef	trwy ardduniant.
	Urdden arnaw,	rhad ac anaw	a ffaw a phlant!

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Gruffydd, R. Geraint “Awdl fawl ddiennw i Hywel ap Goronwy” in Williams, J. E. Caerwyn (ed.) (1994) *Gwaith Meilyr Brydydd a’i Ddisgynyddion* (Cardiff: UWP), (1994), pp. 3–21, 3.

<sup>2</sup> Andrews, Rhian M. *Welsh Court Poems* (Cardiff: UWP), (2007), p. 43.

<sup>3</sup> Jarman, A. O. H. *Llyfr Du Caerfyrddin* (Cardiff: UWP), (1982), pp. 50–51.

<sup>4</sup> Gruffydd *op. cit.*, p. 3.

<sup>5</sup> Jones, Nerys Ann “Golwg arall ar ‘Fawl Hywel ap Goronwy’”, *Llên Cymru* 21 (1998), pp1–7, 6.

<sup>6</sup> Andrews *op. cit.*, p. 44.

<sup>7</sup> Stephenson, David “*Mawl Hywel ap Goronwy*: Dating and Context”, *Cambrian Medieval Celtic Studies* 57 (2009), pp 41–49, 46–7; Jones, forthcoming.

<sup>8</sup> Stephenson *op. cit.*, p 41.

<sup>9</sup> Gruffydd 1994, 12. However, this would disrupt the clockwise tour of Wales that is a feature of this poem and of others by the *Gogynfeirdd*. Gruffydd (*op. cit.*) cites three possibilities – *Ystrad Tywi* (Carmarthenshire), *Ystrad Yw* or an early form of *Stradey Hill* near Llanelli. However, he also notes that *Stradey* is much more likely to be derived from *ystradau*. *Ystrad Yw* still seems the most appropriate interpretation.

<sup>10</sup> Stephenson *op. cit.*, p. 41. Some commentators have seen a break in the roll-call of districts at l. 11 (Roberts, Euryn Rh. “Mental geographies and literary convention: the poets of the Welsh princes and the polities and provinces of medieval Wales”, *Studia Celtica* 46, (2012) pp. 85–110, 92–3). Roberts interprets *cyflawn ofiw* (l.11) as “complete is the visitation”, however the translation “a thorough visitation” proposed here suggests no such break. However, it may be that the change of tone in lines 12–16 indicates regions who failed to show the proper respect by sending representatives to the inauguration. I am grateful to Dr. David Stephenson for drawing this point to my attention (*pers. comm.*).

<sup>11</sup> Andrews, Rhian M. “The nomenclature of kingship in Welsh court poetry 1100–1300. Part I: The Terms”, *Studia Celtica* 44 (2010), pp. 79–109, 96.

<sup>12</sup> Stephenson *op. cit.*, p. 46.

<sup>13</sup> Andrews, Rhian M. “The nomenclature of kingship in Welsh court poetry 1100–1300. Part II: The Rulers”, *Studia Celtica* 45 (2010), pp. 53–82, 59.

<sup>14</sup> Stephenson *op. cit.*, p 45.

<sup>15</sup> Stephenson *op. cit.*, p 47.

<sup>16</sup> The manuscript reads *mennig*, accepted by Gruffydd (1994, 8) but silently amended to *Meurig* by Andrews, *op. cit.*, pp. 2, 49).

<sup>17</sup> Jones *op. cit.*, p. 6.

<sup>18</sup> Jones, *op. cit.*, p. 6; Stephenson *op. cit.*, p. 48.

<sup>19</sup> Stephenson *op. cit.*, p. 48.

<sup>20</sup> Sims-Williams, Patrick “The provenance of the Llywarch Hen poems: a case for Llan-gors, Brycheiniog”, *Cambrian Medieval Celtic Studies* 26, (1993) pp. 27–63, 60.

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## BOOK REVIEWS

*The Brecon Jazz Story in Photographs* by Gena Davies

2013, Edited by David Moore

ISBN 978-0-9563602-2-9

Soft Cover, Price £15.00, Published by 'Crooked Window'

<http://www.crookedwindow.co.uk/projects.html>

This 153 page volume of photographs (some in colour, some in black and white) together with short written descriptions and snippets of conversation captures so well the Brecon Jazz Festival from its beginnings in 1984 up to 2012. In her introduction, Gena Davies has described the growth of the Festival and of her prowess as a photographer. David Moore, the editor, obviously with the permission of Gena, portrays her as a person who for one reason or another has made a number of false starts in life. However, her achievement in recording the Jazz Festival so accurately is a triumph of which she can be justly proud.

There are photographs of jazz greats whose appearances in 'little old Brecon' were held in awe, and photographs of lesser known performers and their audiences simply enjoying the ambience of the town. What fun we had! As someone who was responsible for the finances of the Festival from 1986 to 1992, I know how precarious things were in those early years. Most of us were volunteers and as the date of the Festival approached and then arrived, we dreaded the thought of something going wrong, which of course it often did. On page 78 of the book, Lilian Boutte is shown performing in the newly-opened Theatr Brycheiniog, surely its very existence being due to the reputation that the Jazz Festival had given to Brecon. I still have a cheque for £2200, unissued because Lilian insisted on having the cash instead!

The Market Hall as a performance space did not suit every performer, and early contracts that Jed Williams, the Impresario, had issued, had a clause which permitted artists to refuse to play if they did not like the venue – but still to receive their fee! I think it was Mrs Mulligan who said that she did not fancy her husband Gerry playing in a hall which smelt of fish and the Marketing Officer, Branwen Iorwerth had to use all her considerable wiles to overcome this objection (see page 58–59 for photographs of the performance). I imagine that memories like these come flooding back to anyone who has experienced the Jazz Festival over a series of years, as so many of us have.

This book is an excellent record of one long August weekend which through 30 years has had a far-reaching effect on the whole of the town.

PETER JENKINS

*Searching for Family and Community History in Wales*

Editors: Rheinallt Llwyd and D. Huw Owen

First published in 2014 by Gwasg Carreg Gwalch

Soft back, ISBN 978-1-8452-466-5, Price £12

The Welsh-language version of the book was published as *Olrhain Hanes Bro a Theulu* in 2009.

This book is a “must-have” for those wishing to research ancestral, community and social history in Wales, comprising twenty chapters written by 14 of Wales’ foremost experts and resulting in a significant handbook. Traditional Welsh communities have experienced great fluctuations in the recent past socially and demographically as well as technologically, thereby creating a need in many people to trace their past and discover their roots. Websites such as *Ancestry.com* and *Find My Past* and television programmes like *Who do you think you are?* have made people curious to learn more about their forebears.

The editors, Rheinallt Llwyd and D. Huw Owen both taught aspects of community history for many years – Rheinallt at Aberystwyth University and Huw as Keeper of Pictures and Maps at the National Library of Wales – and they have brought their expertise and specialist knowledge to focus sharply on an excellent compendium.

The initial chapters, written by the editors, provide a general literature survey of sources available. In the first chapter, written by D. Huw Owen, mention is made of the Welsh county history societies producing journals, such as *Brycheiniog* and the dates in which they were established – Carmarthenshire (1905), Cardiganshire (1909–39, 1950), Anglesey (1911), Flintshire (1911, 1951), Brecknock (1928–9), Radnorshire (1931), Caernarfonshire (1939), Merioneth (1950), Denbighshire (1952), Monmouthshire (1954), Glamorgan (1957) and Pembrokeshire (1959). Later special mention is made of Pamela Redwood’s study in *Brycheiniog* of houses in rural Breconshire in the period 1600–1800. Among the sources of information mentioned to assist the aspiring researcher are local family history societies, the historical societies of the main churches of Wales, the Workers’ Educational Association, the collection of oral history, traditions and dialects of Wales housed at the National Museum of Wales, St Fagans, the Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments for Wales and CADW. The second chapter by Rheinallt Llwyd deals with printed sources – Government publications at both national and local level, topographical works and guide books, biographical sources, local literature, newspapers and periodicals and general reference works.

The third chapter, entitled The National Library of Wales (author Beryl Evans) offers guidance on how to get started, concentrating in particular on sources and facilities at the National Library of Wales: sources detailed are

civil registration and census records, parish registers, marriage bonds, probate documents, nonconformist records, manorial records, tithe maps and schedules and archives. Welsh pedigrees and heraldry, Criminal records, Courts of Great and Petty Sessions, Assize Records, Quarter Sessions, Local Government, Maritime sources, maps, pictures, photographs and postcards, folk poetry and paintings are all examined in greater depth in subsequent chapters by experts in their fields. Wales is fortunate in having a large stock of historic houses and Richard Suggett's chapter on houses and landscapes draws our attention to the important collections which are available for research at the Royal Commission Library at Aberystwyth and on *Coflein* the Royal Commission's on-line database. For those who struggle with the Welsh language Richard Morgan's chapter on identifying Welsh place names in historic records will be much appreciated.

There is a tendency for one chapter to infringe on another, an inevitable consequence of examining themes which are inter-related, but the compilation of a brief index is very useful in enabling the reader to locate various references to the same subject. Comprehensive information on 'Further reading' and how to access various web-sites is given throughout the book.

All-in-all this is an invaluable book for those researching family, community and social history.

GWYNETH EVANS

*Brecon Beacons* by Jonathan Mullard

New Naturalist Library vol. 126 (London 2014)

ISBN 978-0-000-736770-2 (hardback), 978-0-00-736769-6 (paperback).

This recent addition to the excellent New Naturalist series is the latest one devoted to a National Park and comes 8 years after Jonathan Mullard's study of Gower. It is appropriately dedicated to Alfred Russel Wallace 'who developed his skills as a naturalist in the Brecon Beacons' (or at least in the waterfall country on its southern flank) and of course draws on the long list of other New Naturalist volumes covering a wide range of specialist subjects.

The stated aim of the series is 'to interest the general reader in the wildlife of Britain by recapturing the enquiring spirit of the old naturalists' and even those very familiar with the Brecon Beacons are likely to find something new and of interest in its 414 pages and illustrations. Many of the landscape photographs are taken by the author, although very properly, he relies on specialists for most of the wildlife pictures.

After an introductory chapter entitled *An Upland Landscape*, Mullard turns to *Geology and Scenery*, describing for example the discovery of the fossil plant *gosslingia breconensis* at Craig y Fro quarry by Mr F. N. Gossling of the Post Office Surveyors Department in the early 1920s. The next chapter, *Creation and Loss* gives a historical overview from glaciation to the Industrial Revolution and later chapters on *Woodlands* and *Ancient and Special Trees* mention other aspects of natural history in its widest sense, such as the sweet chestnut avenue at Llanvihangel Court grown from seeds said to have been taken from the wreckage of ships from the Spanish Armada in 1588. There is also a chapter dedicated to the natural history of churches and chapels, ranging from ancient yews to the ghost slug, *Selenochlamys ysbryda*, a new species discovered in the churchyard of Brecon Cathedral in 2004. *Mountains and Moorlands* provides a reminder of important species such as the Craig y Cilau and Llangattock hawkweeds, the moth *Silurian Eriopygodes imbecilla* and Britain's rarest woodlouse *Armadillidium pictum*, which are preserved in the area. Mullard then turns to *Rivers and Waterfalls*, *Cave Systems* and *Wetlands* and, as elsewhere in the book, there is an interesting mix of current science and history with for example references to early descriptions of Llangorse Lake and the Afanc of Llangorse, a lake monster (perhaps a large pike) from Welsh mythology. The book concludes, unsurprisingly, with chapters on *Farmland* and *Landscape futures*; the latter posing some important questions for the reader.

In short, a good and interesting read and addition to one's bookshelves. It is however not cheap at £55 for the hardback and £35 in paperback (it is also available in a kindle edition but I rather doubt if people will find this a very satisfying possession).

ELIZABETH SIBERRY

*Stained Glass from Welsh Churches* by Martin Crampin  
(Y Lolfa 2014)  
ISBN: 978 184771 825 9 (Hardback) £29.95

In recent years a number of books have been published adding to our knowledge of Welsh churches, their history, architecture and artefacts and Martin Crampin's study of stained glass is an important and welcome addition to this corpus of work. Crampin, who is an artist, photographer and designer based in Aberystwyth, joined the University of Wales Centre for Advanced Welsh and Celtic Studies (CAWCS – also based in Aberystwyth) in 1999 and

has been involved in some of its major research projects resulting in publications such as *Biblical Art from Wales* (2010). He also produced the online catalogue of stained glass in Wales launched in 2011 – <http://stainedglass.llgc.org.uk>

This book therefore draws on many years of research and visiting churches (he pays tribute in the Introduction to the patience of his wife and children) and benefits greatly from his photographic skills, with a wealth of illustrations of stained glass windows throughout the country. The approach taken is chronological, from medieval stained glass, of which there is relatively little in Wales (with obvious exceptions such as Gresford), through the nineteenth century to memorials to those lost in the First World War and modern commissions. A chapter also provides examples of stained glass ‘across the denominations’, setting the Anglican and later church in Wales tradition in a broader context.

Readers of this journal will, however, be particularly interested in what Crampin has to say about stained glass in Breconshire. Unlike North Wales (and the English border counties), there are virtually no surviving examples of medieval stained glass in the area, although other examples of medieval craftsmanship such as fonts and rood screens have survived and Crampin does not offer a specific explanation for this, apart from the general impact of warfare, decay and variations in local patronage. The nineteenth century, however, was a period of major commissions in the county with for example the stained glass by William Wailes (1849) for the church of Llangasty Tal y Llyn on the shores of Llangorse Lake; windows by major firms such as Clayton and Bell such as the Resurrection c 1866 in Llangattock church and scenes from the gospels by the firm of Taylor and O’Connor in Brecon Cathedral (1887). The firm of Morris and Co. remained active into the twentieth century with the Holy Family at Llanfaes, Brecon (1935) and Crampin notes how studios developed their designs quoting the delicacy of colour and painted detail in Carl Edwards’ St Gwendoline at Llyswen (1959). In a chapter entitled ‘In Search of Creative Freedom’, Crampin covers more recent innovative commissions such as the windows by the Canadian David Pearl at the Roman Catholic church of St Joseph, Crickhowell (1978) and, whilst noting that the number of new windows being commissioned may be fewer than at any time (war years apart) since the early nineteenth century, he observes how artists in this medium each strike their own balance between tradition and invention in their creative representations of the mysteries of faith.

In short, this book provides a real insight into the artists and firms involved, their patrons and how stained glass has been used to depict biblical scenes, the lives of saints and commemorate individuals and events. It is also a valuable reference work for further study, enjoyment and church visiting. Some readers may question why important windows do not receive a mention, for example

John Petts' *Christ in Majesty in St Mary's Brecon* (1989), but this is a survey rather than a catalogue and there are numerous references to Petts's work elsewhere in Wales. For those without an encyclopaedic knowledge of Welsh geography, it would, however, have been helpful to have some more information in the text or index about the location of some smaller and less well known churches. Sometimes a nearby town or county is given, but often not, so Google and the complete set of *The Buildings in Wales* are helpful reading companions.

ELIZABETH SIBERRY

