

BRYCHEINIOG

Cyfnodolyn Cymdeithas Brycheiniog
The Journal of the Brecknock Society

CYFROL/VOLUME LI

2020

Editor
MIKE ALUN WILLIAMS

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

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EDITORIAL

1759 is known as an *Annus Mirabilis* (a wonderful year), mostly due to the victory in the Seven Years' War in which the British gained Quebec. Closer to my heart, it was the year that the British Museum opened. Several significant statesmen came into the world in 1759: William Pitt the Younger, William Wilberforce, and William Grenville. It was also the year that a vicar and his wife living in Lion Street, Brecon had a baby boy. Despite his father and grandfather being men of the cloth, this child grew up to become a solicitor and practised the law. Fortunately for us, he later became the deputy-registrar of the Archdeaconry of Brecon, which allowed him to sell his legal business and devote himself to his true passion: recording history. The man, as you will have probably realised, is Theophilus Jones and his legacy is the monumental *A History of the County of Brecknockshire*.

Those of us in Theatre Brycheiniog on the night of Friday 22 March were treated to a wonderful lecture on Theophilus Jones by Professor Prys Morgan. It has been a delight to work with him to bring forward a published version of that lecture, focussing on Theophilus and his 'History', as our lead article in this volume. The 'History' is still overwhelmingly the most cited work in the pages of *Brycheiniog* and Morgan shows us why. It is, without doubt, the finest county history in Wales and is still relevant in so many ways. Admittedly, Theophilus looked down on Dissent and Methodism as much as he did on Rome, and he never really got Henry Vaughan; these prejudices certainly spice up the text on occasions. However, it was due to his diligence, his willingness to visit every square-mile of the county, and his skills as a compiler and writer, that means every other historian of our county works in his shadow.

Theophilus died in 1812 (another date reverberating with relevance) and so probably knew the "greate house" situated in, what is now, Glamorgan Street. But he may not have seen what replaced it: The Mansion House of the Morgans of Tredegar. We have featured the house before in these pages, when Dorothy Powell shared her recollections of living in the house from 1915 to 1928 (after the Morgan family had sold it), and when Nigel Clubb revealed to us the last surviving part of the original house (which was otherwise demolished in the early 1930s). Clubb returns to the subject in our second article, telling the history of the Morgan occupation of the house through the inventories of its contents. There is also a tale of a canny housekeeper who may, or may not, have influenced the inventory, current when she was working in the house, to record that certain items were "old" or "cracked" to avoid later accusations of mis-treatment or clumsiness.

One aspect that stood Theophilus out as a Welsh historian was his love of the native language; he often tried to give English translations of some of the more obscure Welsh sites and locations (sometimes with explanations that

defied the Welsh dictionaries of the time). Our third article, by Martin Robson Riley, looks at the dialects of Welsh that are contained in Thomas Huet's translation of 'Gweledigeth Ioan y Divinydd' (the Revelation of St John the Divine) in William Salesbury's 1567 New Testament in Welsh. Received wisdom puts Huet as a native of Pembrokeshire, particularly as he was Precentor of St David's Cathedral at the time, and some of his dialect is, indeed, from that area. But, as Robson Riley has discovered, not all of it. The bulk of Huet's dialectical words are much closer to home, from the north of our county (he uses dialect from Llangammarch to Builth) and the south of Radnorshire. That makes sense as Huet was, in fact, Breconshire born. In a *tour de force* of scholarship, Robson Riley takes us through the evidence word-by-word showing that painstaking archaeology does not just excavate the soil.

Who knows what dialect Adelina Patti, one of the most famous opera divas of all time, used when she sang, in Welsh, 'Hen Wlad fy Nhadau' at the Brecon Eisteddfod in 1889. For a woman born in Spain, marrying into French nobility, best-known for her Italian repertoire, and living in Wales (to say nothing of her elevation to a Swedish title with her third marriage), she could flit between languages as easily as costumes at one of her Gala nights. In early autumn 2019, our county celebrated this monumental artiste with a series of events, one of which took place in Theatr Brycheiniog and featured a talk by our fourth author, John Rath. In an engaging and beautifully illustrated article, Rath develops his talk to provide both a history of Patti's life and her devotion to her home in Wales, Craig-y-Nos Castle. As Rath quotes in his article, Patti, when speaking of her adopted nation, said "I love Wales and I love the Welsh people". The feeling, as Rath shows, was, and still is, definitely mutual.

Patti was unquestionably an incomer to Wales, but, as the quote shows, took the nation to her heart. In the last of our long articles, Robert Gant finds similar attitudes among the incomers to the landscape of the Black Mountains area, his research showing the decline of home occupation by natives in the period since World War II and the reinstatement of many of the abandoned dwellings as second or holiday homes. Gant also finds that the landscape itself holds the essence of its history, with house abandonment, forestation, and eventual recolonisation—essentially through incomers to the area exploiting the otherwise unseen digital world, allowing many to work from home—all leaving their mark on the ground.

In discussions with Gant, we felt that his paper could be supplemented by an account of actual individuals living in the area, possibly at a time of great upheaval and change. We turned again to Prys Morgan who, in the first of our Notes and Queries shares the story of the quest of his father, T.J. Morgan, to document and record the last native Welsh speakers of Grwyne Fechan. It is a marvellous paean to what once existed and how wider events in the world snuff out even the best intentions. Our second 'Note and Query' provides the story

behind a celebratory cup and how a series of chance acquaintances and events around the fight for grazing rights on Fforest Fawr saw a sophisticated piece of china end up in a farmhouse in the uplands of Breconshire. Ieuan Evans and David Jones Powell provide a gripping detective story. In Letters to the Editor, John Gibbs spots a clock in Caldicot Castle and immediately recognises the name of its maker. For those who read our last volume, he is an individual familiar to you too.

The volume ends with a smorgasbord of reviews, from medieval Wales to mezzotint artwork, and from old photographs to Welsh literature through the ages, to say nothing of a book designed to bring well-being to all who read it.

Before I hand you over to our Chairman for his usual report, we had some very sad news towards the end of last year that our former President and erstwhile friend of the Society, Sister Bonaventure Kelleher passed away. Ken Jones leads our tribute in the next pages and her loss will be keenly felt by all those who knew her. Ar dheis Dé go raibh a hanam.

MIKE WILLIAMS

It is with grateful appreciation that we acknowledge grants towards the publication of this volume of Brycheiniog from Brecon Town Council and the Community Foundation in Wales under the Welsh Church Acts legislation. Thank you.

IN MEMORIAM:
SISTER BONAVENTURE KELLEHER

Sister Bonaventure was a dedicated Ursuline nun, an inspirational teacher, an excellent historian of Brecon, in particular, on the development of the theatre in the town from the end of the seventeenth century. She regretted that Brecon was no longer the County Town and felt that the future prosperity of Brecon largely depended on the development of the towns 'wet weather' attractions, such as the Brecknock Museum & Art Gallery, which augment the natural beauty of the area. She is not only greatly missed by her former pupils, members of the Brecknock Society and Museum Friends but also by hundreds of people in the Brecon area whose lives she has touched. She will always be remembered for her warm smile and how she was prepared to help every person, whatever their problem.

For those of us who knew her very well, we will also remember her occasionally wicked sense of humour.

Hanora Kelleher was born on 28 March 1923 in Blackrock, County Cork, the eldest of Patrick and Margaret Kelleher's four children. She died on 10 October 2019, in Morgannwg Residential Nursing Home, Brecon, formerly St. David's Ursuline School, where she had taught since 1953. Her requiem Mass was held in St Michael's Catholic Church, Brecon on 18 October. The packed Church was testimony to the respect and affection that she inspired.

She received her primary education in Blackrock and then went to St. Angela's Ursuline College in Cork City for her secondary education. She worked in the Irish civil service for a number of years before entering the Ursuline Convent, Thuries, in 1950. She took an English degree as a student at Queen Mary University of London, during which time she also taught English in the Ursuline High School, Wimbledon. She was professed on 18 August 1956.¹



Figure 1. Sister Bonaventure with the Town of Brecon Shield.

In 1953, she came to teach at the Brecon Convent, which at that time had around 75 pupils. The school grew steadily in the 60s and 70s and, by 1979, had around 200 pupils aged from 11-18, of whom around 90 were borders plus a further 40 in St. Joseph's, Junior School. Sister Bonaventure was responsible for teaching English to the senior classes and was very highly regarded as an inspirational teacher. In 1990, the school had around 120 pupils aged 11-18. In 1992 it was decided to close the school and this took place in 1993.

The Convent building, Havard House, was built in the seventeenth century and is redolent with history; Sister Bonaventure later documented the story of the Phillips family who lived there. She also became very interested in the history of Brecon and was fascinated with the development of the theatre in the town in the eighteenth and first half of the nineteenth century. She subsequently wrote two articles for *Brycheiniog* on this subject. The first, in 1993, titled *Theatre in Breconshire in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Century*. The second in 2007, titled *Sites and Performances in Brecon Theatrical Historiography*, brings together information on the buildings used for plays in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and the travelling acting companies who visited the town during the period. Her final article, which required many years of research, was the particularly important 1699 Visit of 'Acters' to Brecon in Wales. This was almost certainly the first visit to Wales of a professional London theatre company, which indicated the significance of Brecon at that time. During the visit, from 21 December to 4 January, 17 plays were performed by such authors as Dryden and Congreve. The intention is that this article will be published in a subsequent volume of *Brycheiniog*.

Sister initially registered for an M.Phil and, when in 2005 she applied to have this changed to a Ph.D, Dr, now Professor, Roberta Mock, who is one of the acknowledged authorities on the Hanoverian theatre, wrote, "In fact the meticulous approach she [Sister Bonaventure] is taking has made me feel quite embarrassed, as she has revealed some of what I chose to 'accept' to be quite problematic. By the end of her report Sr. Bonaventure challenges with absolute justification the work of very important theatre historians. She is already making a valuable and original contribution to knowledge and I can think of no better reason to recommend her transfer from M.Phil. to Ph.D. Status" at Oxford Brookes University for a Ph.D related to the development of the theatre in Brecon. This involved, at the age of 80, attending tutorials once a month and she used to travel to and from Oxford in one day by public transport, leaving the Convent at 6:00am and not returning until 11:00pm. After three years she had to give this up because of bad health.

Sister Bonaventure's interest in the history of Brecon coincided naturally with her membership of the Brecknock Society. She became a member of the Executive Council in 1992 and was President from 1998 to 2009. She was a close friend of Olive Bacon, another former President of the Society, and

assisted her in the arduous task of cataloguing the museum's archives and, subsequently, the Brecknock Museum library. Later, she was responsible for cataloguing the valuable Sir John Lloyd and Gwenvllian Morgan archives and transcribed 100 letters relating to Captain John Lloyd's record in the maritime service of the English East India Company.

Alongside her teaching and research, she was deeply committed to working in the local community. She was very active in Meals on Wheels, the Save Brecon Hospital campaign, and Guide Dogs for the Blind, to mention but a few. She organised a knitting group, which, twice a year, sent knitted clothes to Romanian orphans. She was a co-opted member of the Environment Committee of the Brecon Town Council. For over 20 years, to raise money for the Museum, she arranged the sale of tea and Welsh cakes on the steps of the Shire Hall during the Jazz Festival.

For many years she and Sister Finnian gave talks about various of the older streets in Brecon and sometimes held 'history sessions' with some of the residents. One of her major contributions was in connection with the restoration of the Guild Hall, which had become very shabby. In 1992, she gave a lecture in the Hall, which not only raised a considerable sum of money but increased recognition of the importance of the building and the need for its restoration. Chris Walsh, the current Deputy Mayor and Chairman of the Finance Committee, maintains that this was a significant event and helped the Council to obtain various grants.

She took an active interest in the plans for the restoration of the Brecknock Museum & Art Gallery but opposed the original plan for the town information centre to be located in y Gaer. She was delighted when the new information centre was opened adjacent to the car-parks in the centre of the town.

It is fitting that her work on the theatre in Brecon, which is of national significance in Wales, is to be continued through the three year Ph.D. 'Sister Bonaventure Kelleher Theatre Studentship'. (See the Chairman's Report in this volume.)

KEN JONES

Note

¹ A professed nun is one who has made her vows for life as a member of a religious community.

REPORTS

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT FOR 2019

Y Gaer (Brecknock Museum & Art Gallery and Brecon Library)

Y Gaer is open – and a wonderful building it is!

To start at the end of the year, y Gaer opened its doors to the public on Thursday 5 December and won immediate and well-deserved plaudits for its friendly atmosphere, imaginative design and high quality displays (see the Brecknock Museum & Art Gallery Report 2019 for more detail).

Some account should be given of the way that events unfolded during the year. At the start of 2019, we were in hope there would shortly be a soft opening of y Gaer; this to be followed by an official opening later on. However, various delays occurred, the causes of some of which are alluded to by the Curator in his report. Then, in July, came a surprise announcement by Powys County Council, that with NPTC Group of Colleges¹, it was exploring partnership opportunities to deliver some of the College's future courses "in the soon-to-open y Gaer building". It was evident that what was envisaged was a significant reallocation of some of the spaces away from the purposes for which they had been designed!

The Brecknock Society and Museum Friends (BS&MF) (and the Brecknock Art Trust: the other original local funding partner within the National Lottery Heritage Fund award²) promptly expressed great concern at not having been consulted on this matter and, in a letter to Powys County Council (Powys CC) dated 1 August, we said that the benefits that will be provided to the community and to visitors through the renovated Museum & Art Gallery are central to the Society's commitment and fundraising. "With this as our basis we totally oppose the reallocation to NPTC of any parts of the Museum and Art Gallery." We continued, "The BS&MF Council is also very concerned about the effective functioning of y Gaer as a whole. The current proposal would destroy the very concept of y Gaer and its imaginative collaboration between Library, Museum, and Art Gallery for which so many, both within and outside Powys CC, have laboured for so long. The Society together with other partners, stakeholders, and the community has welcomed and been inspired by the 'three component' concept and has seen y Gaer as the model for a pattern that could well be followed elsewhere". We concluded by saying that the loss of trust engendered by the way that in which matters had been handled was "also having an impact on the goodwill felt towards y Gaer by the many people who have offered their services as volunteers and upon whom so much will depend".

A highly-charged public meeting took place in mid-August and it was evident that serious concerns were held by both the Breconshire community and by the external funding bodies. The consequences were that by early October,

Powys CC had made it clear that the galleries and other spaces within the former Shire Hall³ would remain as originally planned under the National Lottery Heritage Fund award. At the same time, within the ‘new build’ part of y Gaer, Powys CC reconfigured the layout to make some spaces, originally allocated for Library use, available for flexible and income-generating purposes. In association with this development there was an expansion of the library-shelving out into the atrium that links the two parts of the building.

Powys CC invited expressions of interest from potential partners for the use of the ‘flexible’ spaces and also of the Community Room(s) on the first floor. It was agreed with the local partners that such uses must be compatible with y Gaer’s cultural theme and consistent with the agreed Vision Statement for y Gaer published in November 2018.⁴ Shortly afterwards came the announcement that the building would open, on a weekly schedule comprising Tuesdays, Thursdays, Fridays, and Saturdays, from 5 December. This duly happened as a result of much hard work by museum and library staff, some of it, not surprisingly, frenetic in nature.

On 10 December, the Society hosted an evening event to thank people who had given money to its Conservation and Display Appeal (see Appendix) or had given time to its Interpretation project (see last year’s report for details of



Figure 1. Nina Davies of Powys CC welcomes people to y Gaer on 10 December with John Gibbs on the left.

Mike Williams

these). Despite very wet and windy weather, the event was a great success with over 100 people being present. Nina Davies of PCC, Mervyn Bramley, and I gave short speeches of welcome and explanation and the guests were then divided into three groups for a tour of the building (Fig. 1 and 2).



Figure 2. Nigel Blackamore, Curator of the Brecknock Museum & Art Gallery, pointing out an item of interest in the refurbished courtroom on 10 December.

John Gibbs

As made clear in the Vision statement, the success of y Gaer will depend, *inter alia*, “on local partners and volunteers working alongside council staff to deliver services for the community and provide a welcome to visitors from near and far”. A number of members of the Society have joined the list of y Gaer volunteers and, as the year came to an end, were finding much satisfaction in the warm response of visitors to the building and its contents. It is still a ‘work in progress’ however, with the labelling of exhibits to be completed before everyone gets a fully satisfactory experience.

Meetings of the Society during the first part of the year

19 February saw a very good audience at the Muse, Glamorgan Street⁵, for a typically lively talk by Joe England entitled “Merthyr: Brecknock’s great neighbour”. Our 22nd Sir John Lloyd Memorial Lecture took place in Theatr Brycheiniog on 22 March. By way of preparation, Elizabeth Siberry, my

brother William, and I visited Professor Prys Morgan at his home in Bishopston near Swansea some months beforehand to talk through the form that the lecture might take, and, in particular, how it might be illustrated. I had the privilege of being the ‘scribe’ while Prys, Elizabeth, and William talked enthusiastically about Theophilus Jones and the other key historians, writers, and artists of his period. The lecture itself met all our expectations and I now have great pleasure in making reference to the written version that graces this issue of our Journal. Prys is emphatic that *A History of the County of Brecknockshire* is the most important of the regional histories of Wales: not least because the author travelled so widely within Breconshire in search of his material. As usual, the Victor Jones junior school history prizes were awarded before the lecture and a report can be found elsewhere in the Journal. In the third week of April, a number of Society members were actively involved in the first ‘Convivium’ Conference to be held in the Cathedral. The theme was ‘Reading, Writing, and Collecting: Books and Manuscripts in Wales, 1450-1850.’

Henry Vaughan’s Complete Works

In addition to the annual Henry Vaughan Memorial Service, which took place this year on Sunday 28 April, (Fig. 3) the BS&MF arranged a reception on 28 April for the Vaughan Association’s annual colloquium. At this, a set of the recently-published *Complete Works of Henry Vaughan* was presented to Council leader Rosemarie Harris for the new Brecon Library in y Gaer (Fig. 4). In a welcoming speech, Mervyn Bramley said “Our collective community, historical, artistic, and literary interest in Henry Vaughan is a good example of the way that y Gaer, as museum, art gallery, and library, will create a vibrant place for visitors and our own community”. The reception was attended by scholars and followers of Henry Vaughan from the United States, Japan, Canada, Denmark, as well as from across the UK. The event, which also



Figure 3. The Venerable Peter Pike was the speaker at the Annual Henry Vaughan Evensong. Mike Williams



Figure 4. Powys CC Leader, Rosemarie Harris receives the new publication of Henry Vaughan’s complete writings from Professor Donald Dickson (centre) and Dr Bob Wilcher outside y Gaer.

The Brecon & Radnorshire Express

celebrated the 'word art' compositions for y Gaer by Brecon-based poet Chris Meredith, was well covered in the press.⁶

Churches and chapels in Breconshire

In recent times, the Society has come to feel that it has a role to play as an independent Breconshire body that is prepared to speak up for the continuing importance of our churches and chapels in terms of heritage, history, culture, and community. In this connection we held a study day on Saturday 11 May during which we visited three contrasting places of worship in the Usk valley west of Brecon. At the fifteenth-century Church of St David, Llywel (Fig. 5) we were told about a recently completed refurbishment, funded through the, then, Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) and Cadw, which has secured the fabric of the building and created a heritage area at the back of the church. Gillian Byrne, the project manager, outlined the eight-year process, which required three attempts to secure HLF funding. An active Friends group was vital to the success of the project. The Beili Du chapel, built in 1858, at Pentrebach is now in the care of Addoldai Cymru, the Welsh Religious Buildings Trust (Fig. 6). Tanya Jenkins of the Trust explained the significant place that this former Calvinistic Methodist chapel holds in the history of Welsh non-conformity and described how the immediate requirement for repairs has been addressed. Future use may involve some redevelopment for a religious or tourism purpose such as "champing" (camping in a chapel or 'cysgu chapel'). Progress in this



Figure 5: Llywel Church.

Mike Williams



Figure 6: Beili Du Calvinistic Methodist Chapel.

Mike Williams

respect will depend upon local ‘community champions’. St Cattwg’s Church, Llanspyddid is Grade II listed with a history dating back for 1,500 years. It is going through redundancy and a feasibility study is being undertaken to determine whether it can find fulfil a new purpose as a venue for community events, retaining the chancel as a place for worship while opening up the nave as a multi-use space. At the conclusion of the excursion, Mervyn Bramley contrasted the very different circumstances at the three places visited, each requiring sensitive and appropriate solutions balancing heritage, community, and environmental elements to generate funding and to meet the needs of the building itself and of its community.

Art in Breconshire Group

At the AGM on 8 April, we accepted a proposal for the formation of an ‘Art in Breconshire Group’; the meetings to be open to all members of the Society. The stimulus to its formation was the closure of the Art Fund Powys Group as a consequence of the surprising decision by Art Fund UK to disband all its regional groups. The first event was held in Tretower Village Hall on the early evening of 5 June. Clive Hicks Jenkins gave an illustrated talk describing the importance of his time as a Cadw custodian at the Court for the development of his career as an artist (Fig. 7). Afterwards, there was an opportunity for people to walk around the site and through the Castle farm outbuildings. Then,



Figure 7: William Gibbs of the Art in Breconshire group discusses a picture of Tretower court with the artist Clive Hicks Jenkins (right).

John Gibbs

on 16 October, there was a good turn-out at the Muse for the local launch of *Mezzotint and the Artist's Book - A Forty Year Journey*: a very well-illustrated record of Shirley Jones's artistic creativity (see the review in this volume).

The Adelina Patti commemorations

September was very much the month of Adelina Patti, who (born 19 February 1843, Madrid; died 27 September 1919, Breconshire) was one of the greatest sopranos in history (Fig. 8). The commemorations to mark the centenary of her death were organised by a special committee comprising a number of dedicated people including our Programme Secretary Elaine Starling and Society members Alison Noble and John Rath (see John's article in this volume).



Figure 8: Adelina Patti by James Sant. Oil on canvas, exhibited 1886.

National Portrait Gallery, bequeathed by Rolf, Baron Cederström, 1948

Working through, *inter alia*, the Brecknock History Forum, an interrelated series of events was arranged in Brecon and in the southwest of the county where Patti lived in Craig-y-Nos castle from 1878 until her death.

The commemorations began with a concert on Saturday 14 September featuring Welsh soprano Elin Manahan Thomas in the renamed Adelina Patti Theatre in the Guildhall, Brecon. On 22 September, there was 'The Queen of Song' event, a day of talks, music, and exhibits at Theatr Brycheiniog. On 26 September, there was an evening called 'Adelina Patti Remembered' in film, spoken word, and music at The Welfare, Ystradgynlais; this last organised by the Ystradgynlais District Heritage and Language Society. The programme concluded with events in and around Craig-y-Nos on the weekend of 27 and 28 September. It may be noted that the importance of music in the history and culture of Brecknock was brought into further focus by other events publicised by the Brecknock History Forum in the autumn. These included organ recitals and a full list of the Breconshire Eisteddfodau.

Autumn meetings of the Society

In addition to the evening event on 1 November, with the last winner of the Roland Mathias prize (see 'The Roland Mathias Prize report' in this volume), there was a very enjoyable afternoon visit to the Brecon Guildhall with its variety of well-displayed artefacts; these reflecting the diverse history and wide geographical connections of the town. Long-standing Councillor, Ieuan Williams led the tour in his own inimitable way (Fig. 9).

Figure 9: Brecon Town Councillor, Ieuan Williams describing exhibits in the Guildhall council chamber.

Mike Williams



The Sister Bonaventure Kelleher Theatre Studentship

A tribute to Sister Bonaventure Kelleher, who died in October at the age of 96, can be found elsewhere in this volume. During the year, in recognition and appreciation of her work on behalf of the Society, we have pursued the idea creating a doctoral studentship to take forward her research on the history of the theatre in Brecon. To this end, we entered into a funding agreement with the University of Bristol; this providing for a studentship under the supervision of Dr Catherine Hindson, Reader in Theatre History. One third of the cost of the project will come from the Ursuline order and, in addition to using some of our own funds, we plan to approach the many people in and around Brecon

whose lives she touched. I would like to express thanks to Ken Jones, Peter Jenkins, and Diana Altmeyer for ensuring that Sister Bonaventure's archive is safeguarded and available for the successful student to consult.

The Executive Council and its work

Peter Jenkins stood down as treasurer at our AGM in April. We are very grateful to him for his support and counsel over many years. In thanking him at the AGM, I mentioned, among other things, his quiet 'can do' approach. This is something that has been well illustrated by his work on a number of our special initiatives, whether this has been for the Henry Vaughan Project a few years ago, or the Conservation, Display and Interpretation project for y Gaer more recently. I am delighted to say that Peter has agreed to continue to look after the accounts for *Brycheiniog* and remain its deputy editor. In Peter's place, we are very pleased to welcome Nick Jones. Nick is from a Welsh background and practised as a solicitor in the City of London for over 30 years before moving, in retirement, to live near Llangynidr. He has a long-standing interest in the classical world as well as in the history and archaeology of Wales.

During the latter part of the year, our new web-site went live; this thanks to much hard work by Mike Williams, Mervyn Bramley, and Glyn Mathias working with local firm Kindlemix. The URL remains the same as previously: <http://www.brecknockociety.co.uk/>. Reports on the Victor Jones School History Prize and on the Roland Mathias Prize for 2019 appear elsewhere in this volume.

In summary, 2019 was a year in which a great deal happened! For support and encouragement, I would like to thank all the members of the Executive Council, and especially our Programme Secretary, Elaine Starling, and our Executive Council Secretary, Gwyneth Evans.

With y Gaer open, I would like to pay particular tribute to Mervyn Bramley for the resolute, indefatigable, and inspirational way in which he has acted as the contact between the Society and Powys County Council over this project for the last seven years, and also represented the views of the Society on y Gaer in other situations (Fig. 10). We, and the wider community, owe him an enormous debt of gratitude!



Figure 10. BBC Wales interview Mervyn Bramley about y Gaer following the public meeting on 20 August 2019.

Appendix: Donor List

This is a composite of those listed on the Donors' Board (individuals and groups) and the Funders' Board (only organisations who donated to the Conservation and Display Appeal) in y Gaer.

Elinor Anderson	Llanfrynach and Cantref Women's Institute
Bob and Julia Ayling	Llangynidr Local History Society
Barnard Kenneth Hufton Charity	Morgan Llewellyn
Liz Bickerton	David and Sophia Lloyd
Elizabeth Bingham	Thomas Lloyd
Kate Bingham and Jesse Norman	Llyn Syfaddan History Group
Lady Jane Birt	Andrew and Liz Maclean
Chris Bramley	Richard Morris and Sally Morris
Elizabeth and Mervyn Bramley	Trish Mulhall
Lord and Lady Burns	Lavinia Owen
Anne-Marie Caple	Penpont Estate
Gerard Chichester	David Raikes
Colwinston Charitable Trust	Paul Raymond-Barker
M. Glanmor Davies	Professor Martin and Mrs Pamela Redwood
Mr and Mrs Anthony Diamond	Rich Landscapes
Gwyneth and Ieuan Evans	Ginny and John Scott
Paul Evans	Mike Scott Archer
Mari Fforde	Anthony Seys Llewellyn
Anne Gethin-Jones	Elizabeth Siberry
Elizabeth and John Gibbs	Kathryn and Paul Silk
Beryl Gibson	James and Susie Suter
Groups at 57	The Gibbs Trust
Datuk Benny Hoe	The Llysdinam Charitable Trust
Joyce and Peter Jenkins	The Morel Charitable Trust
Margaret and Christopher Jenkins	Usk Valley Trust
Tony and Julie Jenkins	Colonel Rtd. T.J. Van-Rees
Rowland Jepson	Edna Walters
Mr and Mrs D Jones Powell	Roger White
Shirley and Ken Jones	John Leighton Williams Q.C. and Sally Williams
Sir Roger Jones	Kirsty Williams
Mark Kerr	Ystradgynlais District Heritage & Language Society
Andrew and Sue Large	
Ceri Leigh	
Lorraine and Mike Lewis	

JOHN GIBBS

Notes

¹ The Neath Port Talbot Further Education Group of Colleges includes Brecon Beacons College with its campus on the northern edge of Brecon

² The NLHF award was only for work on the Brecknock Museum & Art Gallery. It does not contribute to the costs of the new Brecon Library.

³ The Brecknock Museum & Art Gallery has been housed within the former Shire Hall since the 1970s.

⁴ This invitation to tender was extended into 2020 and consideration of its outcome falls outside the period of this review.

⁵ It is worth recording the enjoyment that the BS&MF has had from its meetings at the Muse over recent years. This is the building which the Society bought for the first ever Brecknock Museum. For an account of its history, see Powell, P.R.F. 2012. A Brief History of the Former Glamorgan Street English Congregational Church, and the Subsequent Use of its Chapel as a Museum. *Brycheiniog* 43:15-17.

⁶ *Brecon and Radnor Express*, Friday, 3 May 2019 – Community News.

THE ROLAND MATHIAS PRIZE

Sadly, this is going to be the last of my reports on the poetry events held in Brecon as part of the Roland Mathias Prize for poetry. The fund, set up back in 2005, has run its course. The ambition for the prize was twofold: to mark the life and work of Roland Mathias as poet and literary critic and to promote the work of Welsh poets currently writing in English. In both those ambitions, I think, it has had considerable success.

The prize was established under the auspices of the Brecknock Society and Museum Friends, and my thanks are due to them for their support throughout this period. Initially there was a broader range of literary genres that qualified for the prize, but, in 2011, it was transformed into the poetry prize within the Wales Book of the Year competition. In this capacity, it has achieved annual Wales-wide publicity, for which I must thank Literature Wales who run the competition.

Each year, the winner of the prize has performed their work in Brecon, usually in the autumn months. And, each year, it has been a well-attended and well-appreciated event. The last Roland Mathias Prize was awarded at a ceremony in June last year in Aberystwyth. Ailbhe Darcy won both the Roland Mathias Prize for poetry and the overall Wales Book of the Year award. Her winning collection of poetry, *Insistence* (Bloodaxe Books), is set in the period when the poet and her family lived in a post-industrial city in the American mid-West. The poems explore her feelings of bringing up a child in an era of climate change and upheaval. Born in Dublin, Ailbhe Darcy is a lecturer in creative writing at Cardiff University.

She described to her Brecon audience how, for some time, she did not want to bring a child into a world that was deteriorating so quickly around her and this is reflected in the imagery she uses. There are constant references to knotweed, mushrooms, and cockroaches, seen as forms of life likely to survive a global climate disaster.

*The summer of 2003
Europe was a fever of heat;*

*the old died, the young fled
the cities. I knew this girl*

*so we took off for Nice,
rented a room for next to nothing.*

*What we got
was an addle of roaches.*

But despite all her premonitions about the kind of world her child would be born into, she does give birth to a son. It leaves her with a mixture of pain, fear, and love.

*After my son was born
grit shone on the surfaces
of my bedazzled eyes.*

*Flesh pooled about me,
so that it was difficult to run.*

*Disease squeaked an entrance
at the corners of window frames,*

*the gap beneath the door, my
shut mouth.*

I wished you all dead.

*After my son was born
my mother came to me
and was gentle.*



Figure 1. Ailbhe Darcy.

Adrian Pope

Ailbhe Darcy's poems in this collection reflect the debate about climate change in a totally original fashion. Her final long poem, Alphabet, is a cleverly constructed 'insistence' on all that is bad and all that is good in a changing world. She does point out that "we are not doomed yet".

Ailbhe Darcy was the fourth poet to win the overall Wales Book of the Year during the era of the Roland Mathias Prize and that is a remarkable achievement. For poetry to win out against all forms of prose, including fiction, is evidence that English language poetry in Wales is achieving a greater recognition. The other overall winners were Rhian Edwards in 2013, Owen Sheers in 2014, and Robert Minhinnick in 2018. The list of winners of the Roland Mathias Prize contains some of the most accomplished writers in Wales.

A final act of recognition of the work of Roland Mathias was held in February this year with Professor Jane Aaron giving her appreciation of his life in a talk to Brecknock Society members. Without him, the Prize would never have been awarded.

GLYN MATHIAS

BRECKNOCK MUSEUM & ART GALLERY REPORT 2019

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NIGEL BLACKAMORE MPhil.
Senior Curator, Brecknock Museum & Art Gallery

VICTOR JONES HISTORY PROJECT COMPETITION

The aim of the Victor Jones History Project Competition is to encourage Year 6 pupils of Breconshire schools to find out and write about local history. The competition is in memory of Victor Jones who was a founding member of the Brecknock Society. He also taught in Breconshire for 35 years and we would like to thank his family for their generous contribution to the prizes. As well as the top three prizes there is also an Art and Design prize and a school prize of £200 for the school that gains the greatest number of individual marks.

This year's Art and Design prize was won jointly by Belle Chambers of Llangors School for her impressive drawing of the old Llangors school and Zola Lien-Buy of Hay School who drew a detailed picture of a World War II Bren Gun Carrier.

This year, as usual, we received a high standard of projects covering a broad variety of historical topics and it was a difficult task narrowing them down. Highly Commended certificates have been awarded to Matilda Corbett, and Max Price of Llangors School, Imogen O'Connell, Harri Brown, and Declan Flynn of Crickhowell School and Billy James of Hay School.

Now for the top prize winners, most of whom were able to join us for the presentation and accept their awards from Professor Prys Morgan. In third



The presentation of the prizes. Back row: John Gibbs, Martine Woodcock, and Professor Prys Morgan. Front row: Niamh Aplin, Sky Deem, and Henry Organ.



The covers of the prize winning entries.

place was Ruan Harrhy of Crickhowell School, who was the only winner unable to attend the event, for his project about ‘The History of Tretower Castle and Court’. It was a very neatly presented project, which included a lot of relevant historical facts, and Ruan’s passion about his subject matter shone through.

This year, there were two second prize winners. Niamh Aplin of Llangors School won joint-second with her project entitled ‘The Experience of Some Women in the Health Service over the last 150 years’. Niamh provided research information about Dr. Frances Hoggan’s life and then she compared and contrasted interviews with female NHS staff of differing ages to see how times and attitudes have changed. It was a cleverly constructed project. The other joint-second prize winner was Henry Organ of Llangors School whose project was entitled ‘The Wells of Brecknockshire’. Henry’s project was beautifully presented, and it drew you in straight away with his desire to find out more about local wells after finding a well in his garden in Llanfrynach. He took us on a very informative journey on his quest to find out as much as he could. It was a very impressive project.

Finally, as Llangors School’s overall standard was so high this year (winning the school’s prize of £200), first prize also went to one of their pupils. Sky Deem’s project was called ‘Tyn-y-Cwm, Llanfilo’ and she wrote an inspiring account about the almost 180-year history of her family home. It was written in a child-friendly manner and her passion to find out as much as she could was evident throughout. She approached her research techniques through all the correct channels, such as collecting census information and studying tithe maps. She also included a lot of newspaper articles and photographs to create a detailed and accurate project that was a pleasure to read.

On behalf of the judges, a big well done to all the children who took part in the competition; we know that a huge amount of time and effort goes into their entries and they all deserve to be congratulated.

MARTINE WOODCOCK

ARTICLES

WRITING HISTORY: THEOPHILUS JONES OUR COUNTY HISTORIAN

PRYS MORGAN

Introduction

It was a particular pleasure to give the Sir John Lloyd memorial lecture at Theatr Brycheiniog in March 2019 because of the help and enthusiasm of members of the Society in preparing all the illustrations to accompany the lecture.¹ This printed version of the lecture concentrates on the county history of Theophilus Jones and why it continues to hold a place of such distinction in Welsh historiography.²

In the revival of Welsh history and scholarship during the eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries—which formed a crucial part of what some have described as a kind of ‘Welsh Renaissance’—many regional, county, and local histories were published. But, by common consent among later historians (for example, G.T. Clark and R.T. Jenkins), Theophilus Jones’ *A History of the County of Brecknockshire* (‘History’) has been considered the finest of the county histories (Fig. 1).³ The study of eighteenth-century Welsh culture has been transformed in recent years by several research projects led by the University of Wales Centre for Advanced Welsh and Celtic Studies, Aberystwyth. In the project on ‘Iolo Morganwg [Edward Williams, 1747–1826] and the Romantic Tradition in Wales’, directed by Professor Geraint H. Jenkins, Theophilus plays the role of Anglican reactionary in contrast to Iolo’s fervent radicalism.⁴ It was Iolo’s radicalism and Unitarianism which made him write that he had found only “a few shrivel’d grains of historical truth” in Theophilus’ ‘History’.⁵ He also plays the role of sober scholarliness in contrast to Iolo’s romantic enthusiasm and invention. Theophilus wrote in 1803 to William Owen Pughe describing Iolo as “Edward the eccentric”, adding “What a pity it is that a man possessing such excellent talents as he does should frequently have so much of the charlatan in his manners and conduct”.⁶ In a more recent project at the Centre, titled ‘Curious Travellers’ and directed by Dr Mary-Ann Constantine, focussing on travel writing in the period of Thomas Pennant, Theophilus also makes an appearance as a peregrinatory historian and antiquary. It is true that, under the pseudonym ‘Cymro’, Theophilus attacked the cliché-ridden superficial tourist literature of English travellers in Wales in an article in the *Cambrian Register* for 1796. He may even have seen his ‘History’ as a solid counterweight to tourist flummery.⁷ However, several recent scholars have observed the irony that both Thomas Pennant and Theophilus Jones are linked to the phenomenon of the hundreds of minor antiquarian walkers and rambles

across Wales, many of them upper-class staycationers, and that the writings of all of them, great and small, are a ‘neglected site’ for the study of modern notions of history. Despite the attacks of ‘Cymro’ on tourists, Theophilus had tramped his way all over Breconshire, as is shown by his detailed description of walking around every yard of the county’s boundaries (and angling in many of the brooks and rivers on the way), and the second volume of his ‘History’ can be described as an antiquarian ramble from parish to parish into every corner of the county.⁸

Turning to Theophilus himself, the first thing that stands out is that his family background and his professional career were almost destined to make a historian of him.⁹ Theophilus was born in Brecon in 1759, in the fine old house in Lion Street—which had been the home of Bishop George Bull at the beginning of the eighteenth century—and he died there in 1812 (Fig. 2). He was the son of Hugh Jones, the vicar of St David’s of Brecon, who had married Elinor, the daughter of Theophilus Evans (1693–1767), vicar of St David’s of Llangammarch (Fig. 3 and 4). Evans was famous in Welsh history for three things: first, as author of the popular Welsh history classic *Drych y Prif Oesoedd*; secondly, as discoverer in 1732 of the healing waters of Llanwrtyd; and thirdly, as author of a



Figure 1. Theophilus Jones c.1811/12 by Thomas Price.

A History of the County of Brecknock, Volume I

vitriolic attack on the Welsh Methodists in *A History of Modern Enthusiasm*.¹⁰ Evans served as curate of Defynnog and Llanlleonfel under Moses Williams, an assistant of Edward Lhuyd, who had kickstarted the revival of Welsh history around 1700. Theophilus Jones not only referred to Lhuyd, but his work on the early history of Brecon town is heavily dependent on a manuscript history by one of Lhuyd’s correspondents, Hugh Thomas. Theophilus worshipped his grandfather, and inherited from him Llwyn Eion, his country retreat in Llangammarch, as well as a fine collection of scholarly books and old manuscripts. Evans was from a notably Tory and Anglican lesser gentry family in the Teifi valley and married a daughter of the lesser gentry family of Bevan of Gelligaled near Neath. Theophilus Jones’ wife, Mary Price, was from a similar background in Carmarthenshire, descended from the Williams family



Figure 2. The house in Lion Street, Brecon where Theophilus Jones lived and died.

A History of the County of Brecknock, Glanusk Edition, Volume I



Figure 3. Theophilus Jones' father, the Rev. Hugh Jones.

William Gibbs



Figure 4. Theophilus Jones' sister, Sarah Jones.

William Gibbs

of Llwynywermod near Myddfai. Theophilus did not follow his father and grandfather into the church but was trained as a lawyer. Due to his acquaintance with legal records, Theophilus added to his income by working as clerk of

indictment and cryer on the Brecon Circuit of the courts. Then, for many years, he worked as deputy registrar of the Archdeaconry of Brecon, which gave him access to ecclesiastical documents such as wills (Fig. 5). When his father died in 1799, he withdrew from his work as a lawyer and concentrated on his magnum opus, taking about five or six years to write and publish the first volume of *A History of the County of Brecknockshire* in 1805, and another four years to publish the second in 1809. It is a massive work with many engraved illustrations and maps, printed by the local printer George North of Brecon on paper from the paper mills at Llangenny. The volumes are dedicated to two clerical friends, the former to Archdeacon H.T. Payne, rector of Llanbedr and Patricio¹¹, and the latter to Edward ‘Celtic’ Davies, rector of Olveston, Gloucestershire, and later of Bishopston in Gower. Davies had been a friend of Theophilus since they were school-mates at Christ College, Brecon, but he did not endear himself to Iolo Morganwg, by hinting in his books on Celts and Druids that Iolo’s bardism and druidism were inventions.

The massive size of the ‘History’ suggests that Theophilus must have collected notes and manuscripts over many years, and he was helped with illustrations by his friend Sir Richard Colt Hoare of Stourhead, and by the young Thomas Price, son of a clerical friend Rhys Price, who later became Vicar of Cwmdru and is best known by his bardic name of Carnhuanawc.¹²



Figure 5. Theophilus Jones c.1795.

William Gibbs



Figure 6. Coats of Arms hand-coloured by Thomas Price (Carnhuanawc).

A History of the County of Brecknock, Volume I

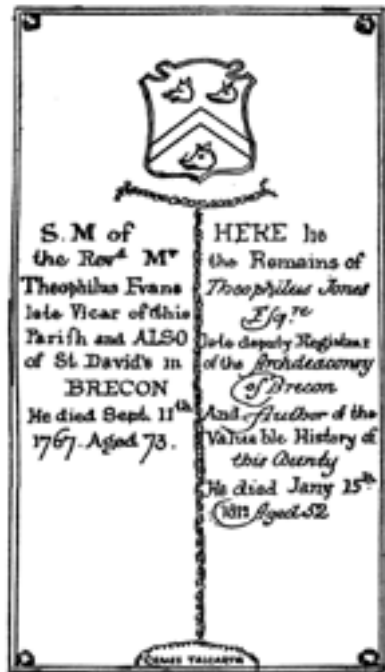


Figure 7. The plain grave of Theophilus Evans and Theophilus Jones at Llangammarch Church.

Mike Williams

It was the young Carnhuanawc who coloured by hand all the heraldic bearings of the Brecknock armorial families in the original edition (Fig. 6). Theophilus was not an artist but had obviously made archaeological notes of ancient stones and cairns and says he had carried out digs here and there on ancient barrows and camps.¹³ His friends and subscribers must have praised the book to him, for he decided in 1809 to embark on a similar history of the neighbouring county of Radnor but lost his health very soon after this and died, at his home in Brecon, in 1812. He asked to be buried in the grave of his grandfather Theophilus Evans at Llangammarch, where the gravestone commemorates the two together (Fig. 7 and 8).

It is clear from Theophilus' critique of Welsh travel (writing, as 'Cymro' in the *Cambrian Register*), that he was anxious to show that a county history properly written was infinitely superior to the travelogues. He was also anxious to write



Tombstone at East End of Grav. Yard Llangammarch Church

Figure 8. Carvings on the tombstone over the grave of Theophilus Evans and Theophilus Jones.

A History of the County of Brecknock, Glanusk Edition, Volume I

something that would match the achievement of his grandfather and was encouraged by the examples of two recent histories of Monmouthshire, one published in 1796 by David Williams the Deist (of which Theophilus had written a review in the *Cambrian Register*¹⁴) the other in 1801 by his friend Archdeacon William Coxe.¹⁵ He was also aware of the famous tours of North Wales by Thomas Pennant (1778–81), as well as Pennant's *History of the Parishes of Whiteford and Holywell* (1796). He would have been aware of Robert Vaughan's sketch of Merioneth history and Walter Davies' edition of the history of some Montgomeryshire parishes, written by the radical William Jones of Llangadfan (in the same volume of the *Cambrian Register* as the review). He also refers in his 'History' to Edmund Jones' *History of the Parish of Aberystroth* (1779).¹⁶ Theophilus was probably aware of the work of Benjamin Heath Malkin on south Wales (1804), though Malkin says that he failed twice to get to meet Theophilus.¹⁷ He certainly knew of the researches of his friend, Richard Fenton, although Fenton's history of Pembrokeshire did not appear until 1811¹⁸ and he may have known that Samuel Rush Meyrick was working on his history of Cardiganshire, (although the volume appeared in 1808 and Meyrick only moved to the area after building Goodrich Court for himself in 1828).¹⁹

Theophilus was not only motivated by his awareness of what amounted to a school of local, county, and regional historians but he was also aware that he was part of the Welsh historical revival of the eighteenth century. He collected Welsh manuscripts, read the work of Edward Lhuyd and his assistants, but also read bardic poetry and the work of eighteenth-century writers such as Lewis Morris, Edward Richard and Goronwy Owen, William Owen Pughe, and Iolo Morganwg. Indeed, he produced an English translation of the prose classic of Ellis Wynne, *Y Bardd Cwsc* (1703), although this was never published. He delighted in the folk verses of obscure local Welsh balladists and, tellingly, the motto he chose for his bookplate is *Cas ni charo y wlad a'i mago* (Hateful he who hates the land that nurtured him) (Fig. 9). Pennant had to depend on the help of John Lloyd of Caerwys (father of Angharad Llwyd, who published her county history of Anglesey in 1832), to cope with Welsh monoglots along



Figure 9. Theophilus Jones' bookplate.

A History of the County of Brecknock,
Glanusk Edition, Volume I)

the way, and Malkin had to turn to his neighbour at Cowbridge, Iolo Morganwg, for matters concerning Welsh. But Theophilus, an insider, was writing from within the Welsh cultural revival, and, in this respect, is rivalled only by William Williams of Llandyngai, Caernarfonshire, who published a continuation (in Welsh) of Theophilus' grandfather's classic *Drych y Prif Oesoedd*, as well as a history of Snowdonia (in English).²⁰

Theophilus says in his preface that the former of the two volumes is really a history of Wales as seen through the experience of Breconshire, while the latter volume (which was printed in two sections), is a description of each parish individually (Fig. 10). There are also sections on heraldry, botany (then known as botanology), and mineralogy, with many appendices of historical documents. But he opens with a step-by-step account of a walk along every yard of the boundaries of the county, trudging across moors (which he calls *rhosydd*) noting boundary stones or distinctive mounds, or following streams to their source or down to their confluence with larger rivers such as Usk or Tawe, in what is a tour de force of topographical writing. The historical narrative opens with long measured chapters on the early history of Wales, describing the ancient British tribes occupying Breconshire, then the coming of the Romans—with a discussion of Roman roads and fortresses—and the rise of the tribe of Brychan Brycheiniog and his creation of the Dark Age kingdom that bore his name. (But it is necessary to turn to a long appendix for the genealogies of the innumerable Brychan descendants). Next, he covers the coming of the Normans at the end of the eleventh century, and the creation of a marcher lordship, which he treats as a kind of ministate, with its own peculiar laws and administration, right through to the early Tudor changes, which he connects with 'The Act of Union'.

As a lawyer, Theophilus deals in detail with the native Welsh laws of Hywel Dda, and with the complex development of feudal law under the marcher lords, illustrating his arguments with sections of medieval charters. He was able to draw on the Welsh medieval literary documents that had been published in *The Myvyrian Archaiology of Wales*, but criticised the 'Chronicle of Aberpergwm' as bearing the hallmarks of alterations by a modern hand. This was, in fact, a forgery by Iolo Morganwg and Theophilus' suspicions must have infuriated the clever perpetrator of the fraud.²¹ He enlivens his text with asides and footnotes critical of other historians, and with fascinating digressions. For example, because Llywelyn ap Gruffudd, Prince of Wales, was killed at Cilmeri in 1282, he has a long and eloquent tribute to him²², and because Dafydd ap Llywelyn or Dafydd Gam died at Agincourt in 1415, there is a digression on how Welsh epithets such as *gam* (squint-eyed) became surnames, and a discussion on how (in his opinion) Dafydd ap Llywelyn became Shakespeare's Fluellen in *Henry V*. He writes of how Gam's descendants, some called Games, some with other surnames, came to possess great swathes of Brecknock by the



Figure 10. Title page from *A History of the County of Brecknock*, Volume I

sixteenth century. But, by Theophilus' own period, a person with a Games surname was the common bellman of Brecon and other members of the family were, through destitution, in the poorhouses of the county.²⁴ His seventh chapter is the last of his narrative diachronic history, stretching from the lordship under the Staffords, dukes of Buckingham, to the late-eighteenth century.²⁵ As an appendix, he gives us an unusual ballad, in Breconshire Welsh, which appears to be written by one Thomas Powell, a prisoner in Brecon gaol in 1680, about an otherwise unrecorded riot or revolt across the county soon after 1603 against various taxes or payments such as 'the benevolence of Welshmen'.²⁶

In his eighth chapter, Theophilus turns to religion down the ages, starting with the Ancient Druids, and drawing a good deal from the work of his honoured grandfather, Theophilus Evans, and the Breton scholar Yves Pezron's work on the Celts. Despite his political disagreement with Iolo, he expresses a hope that William Owen (Pughe) and Iolo Morganwg will proffer a translation of ancient Welsh writings to show the wider world the true enlightenment of the Druids.²⁷ Having traced the rise of Christianity under the Romans, he writes of the medieval church and the eventual establishment of Protestantism, bewailing the lack of means to combat Methodism and other forms of dissent (he is fairly dismissive of Howell Harris and his settlement at Trefeca). The rapid spread of Wesleyan Methodism, which had begun in 1800 and was led, in part, by Dr Thomas Coke, son of a Brecon apothecary, was too recent for Theophilus to chronicle.

In his ninth chapter, on the law, Theophilus goes into considerable detail regarding the laws of Hywel Dda, depending on William Wotton's edition of the Welsh laws.²⁷ As a professional lawyer himself, Theophilus provides an interesting record of the laws of the lords marcher, who had ruled Brecknock from the Norman conquest at the end of the eleventh century up to the 'Act of Union'— or "Annexation" as he calls it. He ends this section with a discussion of the effect of the various early Tudor acts for Wales, and expresses approval for the abolition of gavelkind (a custom, he writes, that still persists in Glamorgan), with its harmful effects on society, presumably by dividing small farms into unworkable snippets of land.²⁸ He criticised Lord Lyttelton, in his book *The History of the Life of King Henry the Second*, for claiming that the laws of Hywel were based on the law codes of the Anglo-Saxons, arguing that the early medieval Welsh were a "far more learned and civilised people than the Anglo-Saxons".²⁹

Theophilus' tenth chapter, on language, popular opinion, customs, and economy probably appeals most to modern readers since its richness of material is not matched by any of the other tours or county histories. He portrays an almost entirely Welsh-speaking county, "the vile English jargon" only dominant near the banks of the Wye. He also explains that 'look you' is only said by stage

Welshmen. He observes that the Welsh find it difficult to cope with the frequent sibilant sounds in English, and produce an exaggerated ‘s’, as in ‘Wass you go?’ What mars the English, of even the squires, he suggests, is an over-use of ‘Yes, indeed’ and ‘Ay. Sure’. He contrasts the Welsh of Gwent and Brecknock, noting that, east of Crickhowell, *rhy galed* turns into *rhw galed* (too hard), and *dimme* turns into *dimmau* (halfpenny). Later on, he explores the differences of Brecon and Gwentian Welsh: for ‘twenty-one’, people in Brecon say *un ar igen* but people in Gwent say *un ar hiccan*. He then discusses the habitual inveterate aversion of the Welsh for the English, as can be seen in the phrase *Sais yw e, syn!* (He’s English, watch out!), and the proverb claiming the greatest delights of the Welsh are *Caws wedi bobi, a Sais wedi grogi* (Toasted cheese and hung Saxon).³⁰ Theophilus explains that inhabitants are still aware of the ‘Treachery of the Long Knives’, whereby the Saxons under Hengist and Horsa had slaughtered the Welsh chieftains and established a foothold in Britain. But he is mindful that several of his subscribers are English and so he hastily adds that these sentiments are probably only to be found in remote and sequestered corners of the county. He then mentions the amazement of the common folk at the floods of tourists from the English leisured class who have invaded Brecknock, noting that they are naturally very curious and inquisitive about the visitors, and yet are very shy when approached. One of his unusual observations is that, when Welshmen have a fight (presumably wrestling or boxing), they are not moderated by a sense of ‘fair play’ and they fight with unsparing ferocity. He is rather equivocal about accusations of a want of cleanliness among the Welsh, saying that he has seen far worse conditions in English towns.³¹ He explains that the Welsh habit of walking barefoot comes from what is a hygienic custom of washing the feet in a well as one approaches a town before putting on shoes and stockings. He describes the frugal diet of peasants and farmers, and also their great dislike of mushrooms. It has sometimes been observed by historians that the ‘Welsh costume’ is the invention of Lady Llanover in 1834, but Theophilus’ portrait of the Brecknock female costume, a flannel petticoat worn with a brown or blue jacket and a man’s hat, suggests that she was not very far from the truth.

He refers to the work of the ‘sad historian’, the dissenting minister Edmund Jones of Pontypool—often called ‘The Old Prophet’—for evidence of the persistence of superstition among the peasantry. He writes that people are fond of tales of the huge primeval oxen, *Ychen Bannog*, and refers to their fears of the eerie baying of *Cwn Annwn* (Hounds of the Underworld), noting how Annwn appears in the “beautiful romance” of, what he calls, the *Mabynogyon*.³² Theophilus must be one of the earliest scholars to use the medieval prose tales as historical or folkloric evidence. The peasantry recounted such tales in their carousals or *llawen-nos* (merry night) around weddings or in funeral wakes. After describing the custom of providing any young couple with a *stafell* (a

room or chamber), and some popular sports, he gives a curious description of their communal singing in their carousals.³³ He describes their fondness for the leek, observing that the vegetable had been an object of mockery by the English, which may have led the Welsh, in revenge, to turn it into a national symbol. He then turns to the Welsh dislike of fixed surnames, showing how Norman surnames in Breconshire such as Bullen and Bois had been turned into patronymic Welsh surnames such as Williams. He was able to date the change of Bullen to Williams to the year 1613. Women in the past had always retained their maiden names, that is, they were just their fathers' daughters, and although one could still find examples in Brecon in 1700, the habit chiefly persisted in remote areas such as Ystradfellte and Ystradgynlais.³⁴

Since he deals with economic changes of the late-eighteenth century in this 'cultural' tenth chapter (warning that his idyll of ancient Welsh society was soon to change for ever), it almost stands as an introduction to his following chapter on Agriculture.³⁵ In his eleventh chapter, Theophilus reviews the work of the Brecknock Agricultural Society, founded in 1755 for all sorts of schemes of improvement, such as road building, and these were certainly observable in the area around Brecon.³⁶ He gives an account of the kind of farming on the various soils of the county, contrasting richer areas with the poor clay soil around Builth, and the poorest soil of the *rhosydd* (moors) and the wild mountains. One of the most attractive features of this chapter is his picture of the Brecknock shepherds and their care for the flocks, and how each shepherd seemed to know his sheep individually, recognising each by its bleat and bray. He mentions also the importing of sheep from Glamorgan and how this could cause difficulty. If there were the faintest breeze wafting northwards into Brecknock from Glamorgan, the Glamorgan sheep would turn and start running southwards towards their native heath.³⁷

Theophilus' second volume, published in 1809, follows a completely different pattern (Fig. 11). Here is a detailed tour of Brecknock taking each hundred of the county in turn, and, within each hundred, moving through each parish, scanning its local topography, buildings, and families. He says that Wales was once a land of pedigrees, but that the subject was nowadays much neglected, and so he wanted to put things right by giving lots of details of families and their heraldry.³⁸ He starts his antiquarian perambulation in Brecon itself, with a detailed description of the town, its ancient walls, gates, and posterns (*postrwm* in Brecon dialect).³⁹ He details the history of the old borough and of its ancient guilds and (drawing on a manuscript history of Brecon about 1698 by the deputy herald Hugh Thomas) the blow-by-blow account of party struggles in the town over the previous 200 years.⁴⁰ He takes us on a tomb-by-tomb description of Brecon Priory Church (now the Cathedral), with pen-portraits of stalwart defenders of burgesses' rights such as Gabriel Powell (who died, aged 60, in 1735)⁴¹, and claims that he himself rediscovered the tomb of Sion

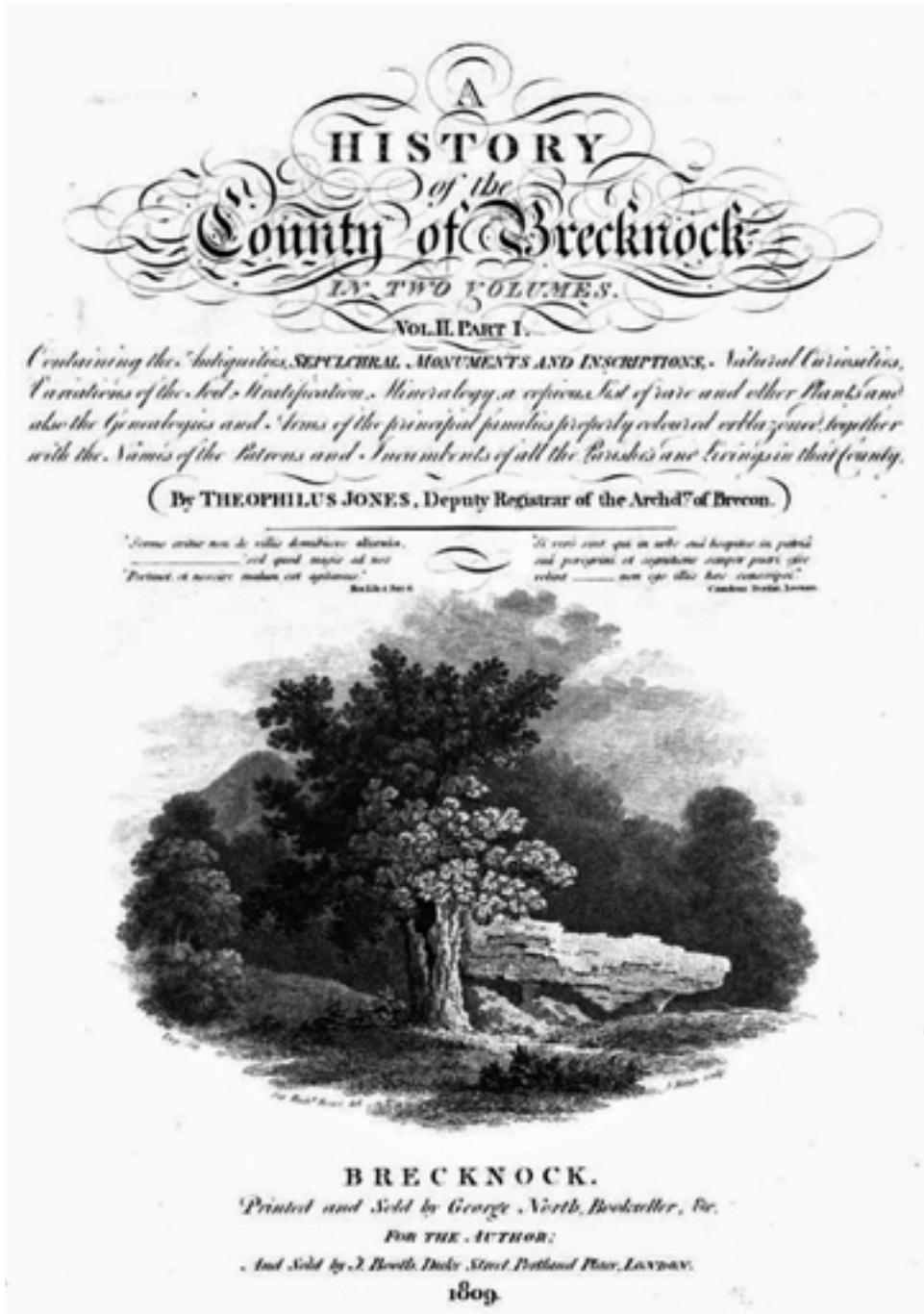


Figure 11. Title page from *A History of the County of Brecknock*, Volume II, Part I

Dafydd Rhys, doctor of the University of Siena, a great scholar of the Renaissance. He notes that the chapel of the Normans was called *Capel y Cochiaid* (Redheads' Chapel) reflecting the tradition of the red hair of the conquerors. Then, he visualises for us the wonderful vista (*coup d'oeuil*) down the priory church towards the high altar.⁴² He attempts a sketch of life in the eighteenth-century town, with unusual details of various summerhouses or greenhouses built by the richer burgesses. He also grumbles, like an indignant old fogey, against the "sentimental sympathising sensibility" of reforming do-gooders such as Dr Lettsom and Mr Nield, who have recently been "interfering" in the running of the prison, "in order to improve the lot of the prisoners".⁴³

He then sets off on his ramble around the county, telling us all about the churches, families, and houses, often noting that many of the ancient gentry seats have become farmhouses or ruins, and supplies an enormous number of family pedigrees for each parish. He also notes the patrons and incumbents of the churches, adding that during the Commonwealth, the parishes were in the hands of cobblers, tailors, and other plebeian craftsmen or even common labourers. He often enlivens his text with what must be rhymes by local country poets. Despite his grand classical education at Christ College, which enables him to sprinkle his text with Latin tags, Theophilus is very much a Welsh speaker as he leads us around his own county: Llangynog, for example is *Llangynog newynog noeth, Gwae'r ci a welo dranoeth* (which he translates as 'Llangynog's fate, ah! Who shall tell, Where cold and famine ever dwell, Hapless the dog condemned to stay, Within its waste a second day').⁴⁴ He uses an *englyn* (bardic stanza) to date the building of the Usk bridge to the year 1563⁴⁵, and picks up several Welsh verses on his travels, such as the defensive slogan of the villagers of Cwmdu ('Black Valley'): *Camenwir ef cwm du, Cwm gwyn yw'n cwm ni* (which he translates as 'Cwmdu's a misnomer, our valley is white / blessed').⁴⁶ These pithy folk verses clearly meant a lot to Theophilus, who was friendly with a poet in Vaynor (near Merthyr) called Hywel Rhys o Flaen Clais, and he prints Hywel's poem to the badger hunt as an appendix.

Although Theophilus was the owner of *Llyfr Aneirin*, the most valuable of all Welsh manuscripts, containing as it did the ancient text of the *Gododdin*, he says he prefers the tinsel of Hywel Rhys to the sterling gold of Aneirin Wawdrydd, and attempts a short elegy to Hywel (who died in 1799) in *cynghanedd* (alliterative verse).⁴⁷ When he comes to Llanlleonfel, he discusses the oddities of the local legal customs, *Maccwyn*, *Mabryddiaeth* and the privilege of the *Gwrthkinffiaid o Fraint*, which he interprets as *Gwrthgyntpiaid o Fraint* (he does not translate this, but it might be 'those who were opposed to the previous possessors of privilege'). This last expression does not seem to be in the standard Welsh dictionaries.⁴⁸ He uses the Welsh dictionaries of his time in his frequent attempts to translate Welsh place names, praising the lexicographer Rev. Thomas Richards of Coychurch for translating *tarren* so deftly as 'rocky tump'. He stoutly defends

Richards against northwalians, such as Goronwy Owen, who had sneered at Richards for filling his dictionary with southwalian slang. He finds it notable that the waterfall of Cilhepste (illustrated by an engraving (Fig. 12)) is called *Eirw Cilhepste*, the word *aerwŷ* (ring) expressing so well a ‘horseshoe waterfall’, although this meaning is not found in standard Welsh dictionaries.⁴⁹ Similarly, he tries to interpret unusual surnames, suggesting Havard comes from Havre de Grace in Normandy, and always notes unusual names and surnames, such as Games from Dafydd Gam, Honthie from the river Honddu, and Cadogan from Cadwgan of Llwyncadwgan in Llangammarch, who had risen to fame in Ireland.⁵⁰ Theophilus is possibly the earliest historian to pay attention to Welsh surnaming.



Figure 12. Cilhepste Waterfall by Charles Norris. *A History of the County of Brecknock*, Volume II

Theophilus is rather hit-and-miss in his portrayal of famous people. He gives ample coverage to his grandfather, Theophilus Evans, and talks warmly of his achievements, as he does of Joseph and Thomas Harris, the brothers of Howel Harris, while treating Howel rather coldly.⁵¹ James Howel (the historian) is

mentioned under Llangammarch, but Theophilus shows little appreciation of Henry Vaughan the Silurist and his brother Thomas.⁵² Unexpectedly, he tells us that Hay Castle was let by the Gwyn family to various people including the ‘once famous George Psalmanazar’ (the literary forger).⁵³

As he rambles from parish to parish, he always emphasises the role of the parish church, and thus the Anglican church, as one would expect of someone of his background. Notwithstanding, he often gives a harshly critical picture of the state of the churches, many of them in a lamentably dilapidated and neglected condition. Llanfihangel Tal-y-llyn was one of many examples. He likens Llanfihangel’s exterior to “a whitened sepulchre”, but the interior is “disgraceful” and “indicates a deplorable indifference for the religion we profess”. The church is gloomy, mostly with an uneven earth floor, the “pulpit is a small sheep pen, the seats are decayed and uneven”, and, at the east end, we find:

... two boards nailed together, with four posts to support them, worth about sixpence of firewood, and for no other purpose; these are covered by a small woollen cloth, so incrustated with dirt and dust, since the year 1755, when it was bought or given to the church, that is nearly as hard as the wood it covers. On this the holy communion is administered.⁵⁴

Although Theophilus (writing as ‘Cymro’) despised the superficial English tourist coming to admire Welsh landscape, he himself has frequent cause to enthuse about the picturesque beauty of wild and remote areas. For example, while in Llanbedr Ystad Yw (home of his friend H.T. Payne), he notes the mountainous aspect of the valleys of the greater and lesser Grwyne: “the painter will be enraptured with the view of them”, with their picturesque woody knolls, and that lately “some few painters have exercised their talents there”. As he wanders there himself, he hears at night the nightingales singing in the woods, (the songster is not to be heard further west than Bwlch and Cwmdru) and loves the hills, which are free from bogs, providing excellent pasture for sheep and young cattle. He notes the upper fields are mysteriously better for growing wheat than those lower down the valley. In this respect, Theophilus was a truly romantic writer, typical of the period under the influence of Rev. William Gilpin’s recently invented “Picturesque” aesthetic.⁵⁵ However, Theophilus, having traversed the new industrial communities in the parishes of Vaynor and Llangynidr, also noted the rapid development of large industrial concerns in such places as Rhymni, Blaenafon, and Clydach as well as the huge change caused by new roads and the recently-opened canal.⁵⁶ He, at last, returns to where he began his tour, the town of Brecon, ending with a visit to Christ College, with its tombs and antiquities. He ends the book itself with a survey of the rocks and minerals, the botanology of the county, and a statistical survey based on the government census of 1801.

What can be said in conclusion about the virtues of the ‘History’, those qualities which set it apart, making it a classic of its kind, establishing the criteria by which other county or local histories can be measured? Even from a cursory review, it will surely be clear that the book is intensely richly-textured in its great variety of sources old and new, and its style is extremely varied in its ‘voices’, or tonalities, with its Latin documents, Welsh poetry, heraldic, and genealogical details. He throws in a good deal of pawky humour and arch remarks as well. For instance, when looking at the tomb at Glasbury of John Lewis of the Exchequer Office (died 1737), he asks how can any attorney be commended for his honesty?⁵⁷ We frown or smile at his reactionary fageisms, as when he grumpily fears that what comes of giving common folk schooling is that they use it to criticise the Church, and warm to his great delight in people with all their faults and foibles. The ‘History’ is a teeming pageant with a cast of hundreds, ranging from Norman lords to guild craftsmen, clerks, and lawyers to even the lowly labourers who took over the parishes in the time of Cromwell. He can also change, when needed, to the minor key, as he modulates to gloomy ruminations in neglected churches, lonely walks across moorlands to dig up ancient barrows or look for boundary-stones, and then rises to thrill at sublime and romantic landscapes.

The book’s great variety of writing is bound up with Theophilus’ richness and variety of sources gathered from his wide reading. Not for him just the expected histories of England by Hume and Smollett, or Rymer’s *Foedera*, Camden’s *Britannia*, Edward Lhuyd’s *Archaeologia Britannica*, but also works such as Edward Jones’ *Musical and Poetic Relics of the Welsh Bards*, William Owen’s *The Heroic Elegies of Llywarch the Old*, Pinkerton’s vicious attacks on Celtic historians, Giraldus Cambrensis, David Powel’s *Historie of Cambria*, the manuscripts of George Owen of Henllys and George Owen Harry, the manuscript tour of Wales in 1684 by Thomas Dinely—which he, or possibly the young Carnhuanawc, must have copied at Badminton library—medieval Welsh bardic verse, and recent Welsh verse by Edward Richard. He also made use of recondite books, as when he discusses the design of medieval castles, comparing them to Crusader castles in Syria, as described by the late seventeenth-century Huguenot traveller to Mecca, Chevalier Jean Chardin (later Sir John Chardin, FRS). Could he have borrowed this book from his friend, the Orientalist Sir William Ouseley?⁵⁸

Another feature which sets it apart is the book’s Welshness, its closeness to the author’s native soil and its ancient language, giving it an authentic feel. Of this, we have already seen many examples above. He is anxious to draw attention to Welsh names and tries his best to interpret them into English (with varying degrees of success). The grit in the oyster shell that produced the pearl, was the anger of ‘Cymro’ in the *Cambrian Register*, spurring Theophilus to show how one ought to write about Wales. A valuable aspect to the ‘History’ is its

intense realism or factualism, its welter of facts great and small. It is true that, on occasion, as in his prefaces, Theophilus writes lengthy, wordy paragraphs, moving at a leisurely pace, but when he is describing more recent centuries and getting closer to families and places he knows, he overwhelms the reader with details. Theophilus has culled all these from dusty archives or from recording details on gravestones, sometimes scraping whitewash off wall monuments, or from oral testimony, and justifies everything he says with facts. The reader is perhaps left exhausted but has no doubt but that he has travelled in his mind through eighteenth-century Brecknock. This vivid realism is one of the most engaging features of the 'History'.⁵⁹

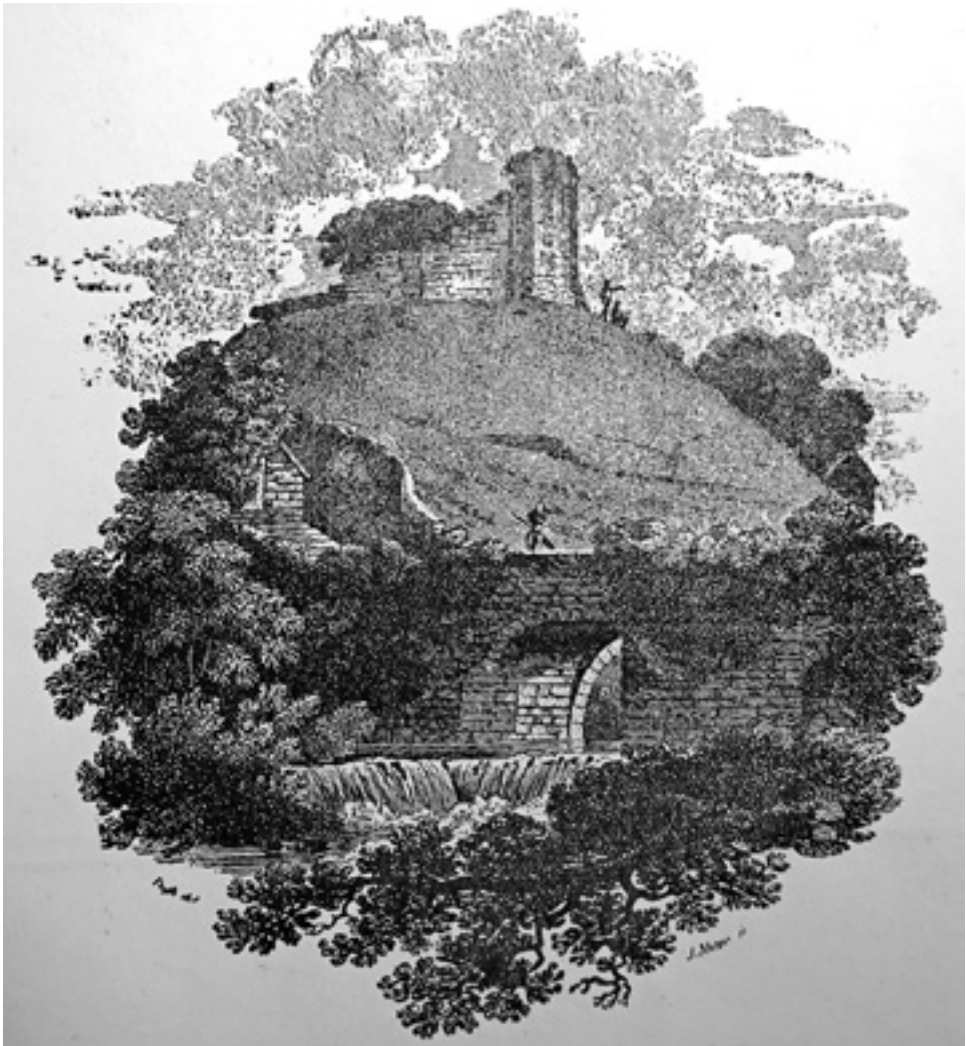


Figure 13. Detail from title page from *A History of the County of Brecknock*, Volume I.

But there is also a tension in the book between its realism and its nostalgia for a world that has been, more or less, lost. Its style is sometimes edgy and nervous, because Theophilus is angrily aware that the old Anglican Tory gentry and clerical society he describes in such detail is already challenged, and, by the time of his writing, even undermined by the world of progress, canals, ironworks, mines, principally on the southern horizon of the county at Hirwaun, Blaenafon, Clydach and other places. He is obviously upset by enlightened do-gooders and interfering busybodies, and at the rapid spread of dissenters and Methodists. He was also writing at a time of real danger for everybody, author and reader alike, when Britain was in the midst of a long war against Revolutionary and Napoleonic France. The engraved frontispiece for the 'History' is based on a drawing of the bridge beneath Brecon Castle, made by Edward Pugh of Ruthin⁶⁰: one wonders why there is a little sentry standing on the bridge (Fig. 13). What is he defending, and against whom? Theophilus and his wife lodged French naval officers who were sent to Brecon as prisoners of war in 1805. The challenge of the new world, which had come to the doorstep, gives a sharp edge to his book, which at its heart has a deeply serious theme of cherishing antiquities and recording things that are in danger of disappearing for ever. It is for these reasons, and surely many others, that the 'History' of Theophilus Jones is considered a classic among Welsh county histories.

Notes

¹ I should like to thank John Gibbs, Williams Gibbs, and Elizabeth Siberry for all their help in preparing the lecture.

² Jones 1805-09. I have used the Davies reprint of 1898 throughout (henceforth HB).

³ Morgan 1981: 55, 95-6, 133; Jenkins 2000: 23-49 for background of historiography.

⁴ Jenkins 2018: 24, 128, 188, 198; Jenkins 2012: *passim*.

⁵ National Library of Wales MS 13136A: 96-7.

⁶ Jenkins, Jones, and Jones 2007, II: 536-9.

⁷ Davies 2007: 65-93; Jones, T. ('Cymro') 1796.

⁸ Constantine 2015: 21-43; Pennant 1784; Constantine and Leask 2017; 2018: *passim*.

⁹ Rhys-Jones 1959: 1-34; Davies 1905: *passim*.

¹⁰ Evans 1716, 1740; Williams 1991: 17-27.

¹¹ Parry-Jones 1959: 35-50.

¹² Gibbs 2018: 56-67; Williams ('Ysgafell') 1854; 1855: *passim*; Thompson 1983: *passim*.

¹³ HB, II: 386-7.

¹⁴ Williams 1796.

¹⁵ Coxe 1801.

¹⁶ Jones 1779.

¹⁷ Malkin 1804.

¹⁸ Fenton 1811.

¹⁹ Meyrick 1808.

²⁰ Jones 1999.

²¹ HB, I: 44, n. 4.

²² HB, I: 72.

²³ HB, I: 80-1.

²⁴ HB, I: 85.

- ²⁵ HB, I: 95-100.
²⁶ Evans 1716, 1740. Pezron 1706; HB, I:101 n.
²⁷ Wotton 1730.
²⁸ HB, I: 140-1.
²⁹ HB, I: 42 n.
³⁰ HB, I:139.
³¹ HB, I:140.
³² HB, I:141. This is the Mabinogion or Mabinogi in modern Welsh.
³³ HB, I: 142.
³⁴ HB, I: 143.
³⁵ HB, I: 146.
³⁶ HB, I: 149.
³⁷ HB, I: 147.
³⁸ HB, II: Preface, v.
³⁹ HB, II: 220.
⁴⁰ HB, II: 183.
⁴¹ HB, II: 192.
⁴² HB, II: 206.
⁴³ HB, II: 224.
⁴⁴ HB, II: 302.
⁴⁵ HB, II: 240.
⁴⁶ HB, II: 414.
⁴⁷ HB, II: 476.
⁴⁸ HB, II: 297.
⁴⁹ HB, II: 481.
⁵⁰ HB, II: 330.
⁵¹ HB, II: 278-9.
⁵² HB, II: 332.
⁵³ HB, II: 363.
⁵⁴ HB, II: 341-2.
⁵⁵ HB, II: 378-9; Andrews 1990.
⁵⁶ HB, II: 404, 413, 425.
⁵⁷ HB, II: 351.
⁵⁸ HB, II: 328.
⁵⁹ Williams 1991: 17-27.
⁶⁰ Barrell 2013: *passim*.

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EXPLORING THE INTERIOR OF THE BRECON MANSION HOUSE: THE INVENTORIES OF THE MORGANS OF TREDEGAR 1860–1914

NIGEL CLUBB

Introduction

The Mansion House of the Morgan family in St Mary Street, Brecon, has been the subject of two recent contributions to *Brycheiniog*, one of which features the charming recollections of the house by Dorothy Powell (known as Elizabeth), who lived there as a young girl from 1915 to 1928 after its sale by the Morgans, and includes contemporary photographs of the family and the House.¹ The other piece examines the architecture of the north-west wing of the Mansion House, which is all that survives today, following the demolition of the main building.²

The present article uses the Inventories of the Morgans as a guide to the layout and contents of the Mansion House in relation to its function at the heart of Brecon and the county. They cover the final 50 years or so from 1860 of the ownership of the house by the Morgans and the subsequent disposal of its contents. This anticipates the sale of the Morgan estates in Breconshire in 1915–1921, which have also been discussed in *Brycheiniog*.³ An Inventory of 1914 also survives for the Morgans' Shooting Box at Nant-ddu in Cwmtâf.

The Morgans and Brecknock

The involvement of the Morgans, and other landed families in Breconshire, and the scale of their estates here has been well studied.⁴ The Morgans acquired their influence and land in Breconshire in 1661, when William Morgan of the Tredegar line married Blanche Morgan. She was a cousin, but also the heiress of the Breconshire line, which was based at Y Dderw in the parish of Pipton, near Llyswen, on the River Wye, where the original layout of the house survives reasonably intact in spite of later remodelling.⁵

Blanche's substantial dowry helped to fund the major building work at Tredegar House, near Newport, Monmouthshire, by William Morgan between 1664 and 1672, which has been described as "one of the most outstanding houses of the Restoration period in the whole of Britain".⁶ It also marked a significant increase in the power and influence of the Morgans, which is best known in Monmouthshire, but was also exercised in Glamorgan and to a very considerable extent in Breconshire. This influence was exercised on many levels: through national politics; the justice system; borough and county administration; estates and land ownership; and the associated revenues. Highly significant was their leadership of society (almost as regional princes), their relationships with their tenants, and their involvement in country pursuits. In the eighteenth century, Morgans were members of parliament for the

Brycheiniog, 2020, Volume LI, pages 53–68.

Brecon borough seat for a combined total of 52 years and for the Breconshire county seat for 59 years continuously.⁷ Their dominance over parliamentary representation for Brecon continued through much of the nineteenth century.

The Castle Hotel, Brecon was built by Sir Charles Gould Morgan, the second baronet, between 1809 and 1814 within the castle ruins that he owned (Fig. 1). He had been Member of Parliament for Brecon from 1778–87 and 1787–1806. His son, Charles Morgan Robinson Morgan was elected for the Brecon seat in 1812, 1830, and 1835. The significant role played by the Morgans during parliamentary elections, including hospitality and activities at the hotel, has been discussed in *Brycheiniog*.⁸

From the late-eighteenth century, and through the nineteenth century, there were shifts in the Morgan's sources of influence and power as coal, heavy industries, urban development, and transport in south Wales generated increasing wealth for them, ultimately marginalising income from agriculture, which was already decreasing. In parallel, by the end of the nineteenth century, the extension of the voting suffrage rendered it more difficult for landowning families to dominate county and borough politics. The last Morgan to serve as an MP in Breconshire, from 1858 to 1875, was Godfrey Charles Morgan, the First Viscount Tredegar, who died in 1913.



Figure 1. Statue of Sir Charles Gould Morgan (1760–1846) in High Street, Newport, Monmouthshire, by John Evan Thomas of Brecon, 1848. Nigel Clubb

The Brecon Mansion House

There is evidence from the Brecon Rent Roll of 1664 that William Morgan had owned what was called the “greate house” in Morgannwg (Glamorgan) Ward—almost certainly inherited from the Breconshire Morgans—although, at that time, it appears to have been rented out to William Lucy, the Bishop of St David’s.⁹ A drawing by Meredith Jones of 1744 shows a “great House opposite to St Mary’s Church” of seventeenth-century date, with a handsome six bay façade, central entrance, and dormer windows in the roof, although

this house was said to be in the ownership of Hugh Edwards at this time.¹⁰ The Inventories discussed below relate to the later Mansion House of late-eighteenth or early-nineteenth-century date, built in St Mary's Street and almost fronting the tower of St Mary's Church, with a garden and rear entrance into Glamorgan Street. Although not proven, it is tempting to suppose that there is Morgan continuity in this part of the town between the earlier house and the later Mansion House.

Several of the principal county families had houses in Brecon, which contributed to the growing prosperity when it was one of the major towns of Wales. This continued into the second half of the eighteenth century and the first half of the nineteenth century and is reflected in the richness of the residential buildings surviving from that time. Brecon was the main centre of the political, administrative, and social influence of these families. The nature of society is reflected in the parallel development of banking and links with industry, as well as activities such as the Brecknockshire Agricultural Society, horse racing, and a flourishing theatrical presence in Brecon patronised both by the local gentry and by the merchant and professional classes.¹¹

In 1909, the Glanusk edition of Theophilus Jones describes the Mansion House as a "commodious dwelling ... used as the occasional residence of the Tredegar family and is always kept in readiness for their use".¹² Between family visits, the only occupants were the housekeeper and perhaps a maid, although, during the second half of the nineteenth century, it was sometimes occupied by junior branches of the Morgan family for several years at a time.

The family photographs of the Powell family referenced above, provide tantalising glimpses of the later Mansion House (Fig. 2), but not a complete view of the main façade, which was difficult to photograph from the narrow street. In a published architectural description of the house, the central façade is described as symmetrical and of stone, stuccoed throughout and of five bays, with the three central bays projecting under a pediment. It was a double-depth plan with a wide central hallway.¹³ There were two service wings along the



Figure 2. Photograph of the front elevation of the Brecon Mansion House.

Powell Jones family

street to the south east and the north west (the latter, known as the ‘kitchen end’, is the only surviving component of the house).

An early photograph taken from outside the Wellington Hotel gives a view of the Mansion House in the distance (Fig. 3) and from this it is just possible to gauge how the front façade and the pediment dominated St Mary’s Street. A drawing of around 1900 (Fig. 4) shows the rear elevation of the main house with St Mary’s Church tower behind.¹⁴

Those pioneers of the recording and interpretation of historic houses in Breconshire in the 1960s, Smith and Jones, said that they were aware of the Mansion House, but that they “did not look” at it, although it had in any case disappeared 30 years previously.¹⁵



Figure 3. Mid-nineteenth-century view from outside the Wellington Hotel showing how the façade and pediment of the Mansion House dominated St Mary’s Street.

Morrison 2018: 45

Figure 4. Drawing by Llwyd Roberts of the rear elevation of the Brecon Mansion House with St Mary’s Church tower to the right, c.1900.

Newport and Monmouthshire
Newspaper Co.



The Mansion House Inventories

Inventories, which detail the contents of a building organised by rooms, are among the most compelling and personal of historical documents for giving clues to spaces within which people moved and the objects they moved around. In the case of the Morgan inventories, they offer a ‘through the keyhole’ tour, room-by-room and object-by-object, including the grander reception and living rooms, the bedrooms of the Morgans and their servants, and also the service areas, such as the kitchen and pantry and the contents of pantries and cupboards.

Three Inventories survive for 1860, 1887, and 1912.¹⁶ Subsequent inventories survive from the early part of World War I. These document the removal of some of the contents, both from the Mansion House and from Nant Ddu, the Morgans’ Shooting Box.

The Mansion House Inventory of 1860

The 1860 Inventory (Fig. 5) provides a key to the layout of the Mansion House at the time of Charles Morgan Robinson Morgan, (Fig. 6). He was the third baronet, born in 1792, who succeeded in 1846, became the first Baron Tredegar in 1859, and died in 1875.¹⁷

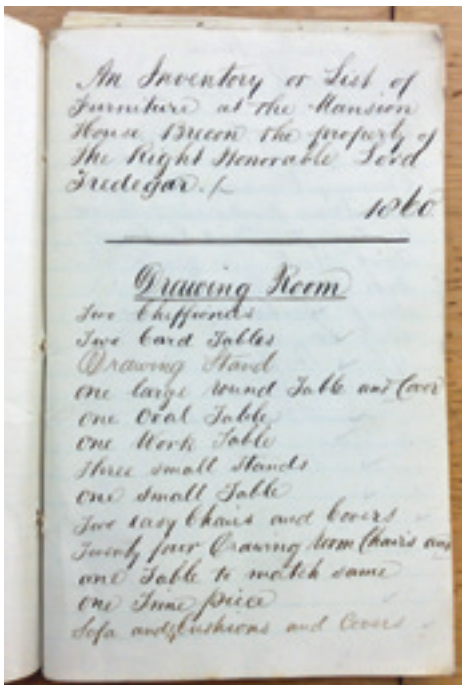


Figure 5. Front page of the 1860 Mansion House Inventory.

National Library of Wales



Figure 6. Albumen print of 1863 of Charles Morgan Robinson Morgan (1792–1875) and Rosamund Morgan (1808–1883).

National Portrait Gallery

The Inventory is arranged as follows:

- *Ground Floor* – The principal rooms were the front hall, dining room, and library. The extensive service area included a servants’ hall, butler’s pantry, housekeeper’s room, kitchen, pastry larder, meat larder, scullery, and boot room.
- *First Floor* – The principal rooms were Lord and Lady Tredegar’s bedroom with dressing room, the bedroom of the Hon. Godfrey Charles Morgan (the son and heir), and two other family bedrooms with dressing rooms. Service accommodation included a large nursery and rooms for the housekeeper, nurse, valet, and manservants.
- *Attic* – The attic storey included five other bedrooms and a housemaid’s closet.

It is clear from the layout of the rooms and their contents that the Mansion House was a microcosm of Tredegar House and that it could accommodate the family plus servants such as the butler, valet, housekeeper, manservants, and the nurse. The servants were brought up from Tredegar House when the family was in residence, except the housekeeper, who was permanently resident.

The House could accommodate and entertain significant numbers of people. There were 28 beds (and appropriate bedding) and 120 chairs. Prolific quantities of linen, cooking utensils, cutlery, china, and glassware was stored away in seemingly endless storage areas such as the butler’s pantry, kitchen cupboard, pastry larder, meat larder, scullery, servants’ hall cupboard, and hall cupboard. In total there were over 300 china plates, 200 glasses, and 65 pewter plates, old and new.

The Monmouthshire Merlin of 1 October 1859, the year before the Inventory, provides a sense of the Morgan comings and goings at the Mansion House. Lord and Lady Tredegar, the Hon Geoffrey Morgan, and other family had recently arrived there to attend the Brecon Races accompanied by “merry peals” from St Mary’s and St John’s and the “sincere and hearty welcome” of inhabitants “rich and poor”.¹⁸

A major event was planned for 10 April 1860 (in the year of the Inventory), to celebrate the cutting by Lady Tredegar of the first sod of the Hay, Hereford and Brecon railway, on land belonging to Penlan Farm (located between the top of Cerrigcochion Hill and the Struet). Activities, which were on a scale that even the oldest inhabitant of Brecon would not have seen, involved a march—likely to be from the Mansion House to the site—involving over 500 shareholders, many from London, and several hundred dignitaries and representatives of organisations from Brecon, Hereford, and nearby towns. Later, there was to be a “*déjeuner a la fouchette* on a sumptuous scale” in a huge tent in the Market Place, followed by a Ball at the Castle Hotel presided over by Lady Tredegar.¹⁹

The Mansion House Inventory of 1887

The Inventory of 30 June 1887 (Fig. 7), was undertaken during the time of the son and heir of Charles Morgan Robinson Morgan.²⁰ He was Godfrey Charles Morgan (Fig. 8), the second Baron Tredegar, born in 1831, who succeeded in 1875, became the first Viscount Tredegar in 1905, and died in 1913.²¹ While Godfrey is chiefly known at a national level for his military career, including Balaclava, and also had a parliamentary one, in his later life, when termed 'Godfrey the Good', he was most remembered in Breconshire, Monmouthshire, and Glamorgan for his philanthropy and generosity and, even, his wit.²²

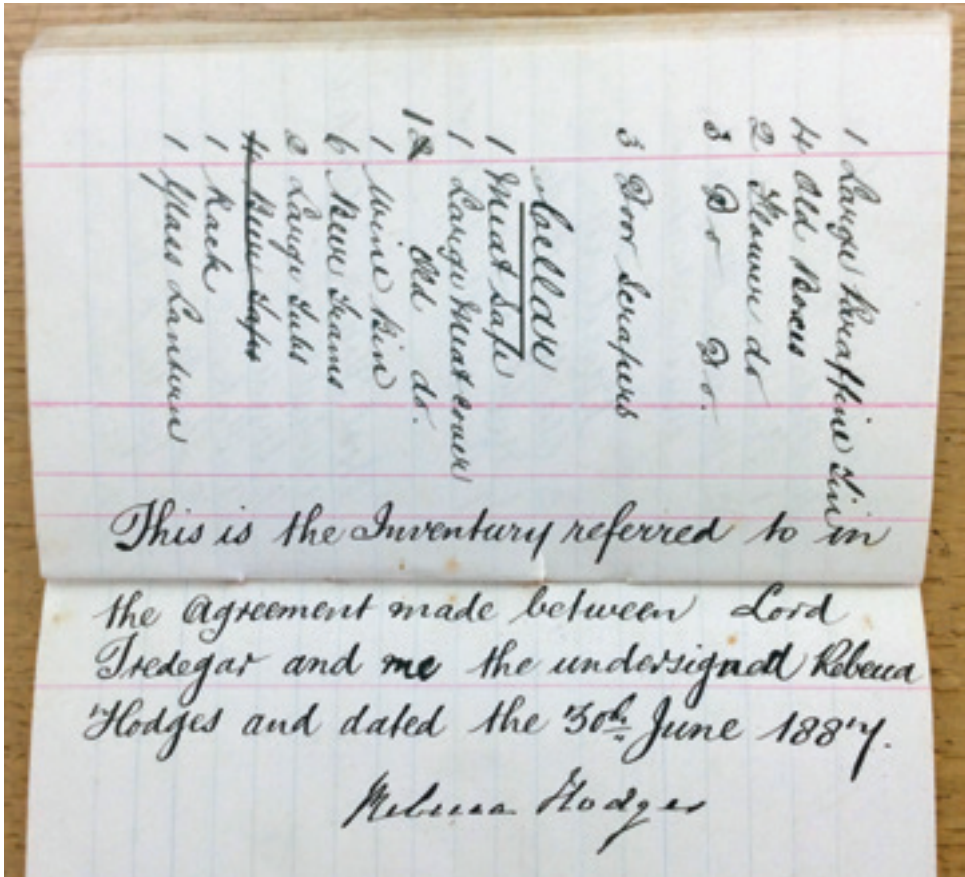


Figure 7. Final page of the 1887 Mansion House Inventory signed by Rebecca Hodges.

National Library of Wales

The Inventory was drawn up on the appointment of Rebecca Hodges as housekeeper and caretaker at the Mansion House. The contract between Godfrey Morgan and Rebecca survives.²³ Her main duties were to keep the house and premises clean and in good order, to take proper care of the

household furniture, and to keep diligently aired the house, beds, and linen, and all effects contained in the inventory, which was to be kept up to date to reflect the removal of items or the arrival of new ones. She was also to keep the garden in good order. In return, she would be paid £40 a year in quarterly instalments (perhaps about £5,000 in terms of current values²⁴). While this may not seem very much, it was not far off the average UK wage for the time and towards the upper level of pay for a female servant. It would have taken account of Rebecca's contractual right to use the produce of the garden when his lordship or his family were not in residence and, of course, she had living accommodation in the house and, perhaps, other perks.

There is remarkably little difference between the Inventory of 1860 and that of 1887, suggesting that the contents were relatively static. It is noticeable that items are now more likely to be described as "old" or "cracked". Items include "old" bedroom chairs, "old-fashioned" plate, "old" clothes-horses, and "cracked" soap dishes. This may have been a clever move on the part of the new housekeeper to safeguard her position, but it is also possible that the Mansion House was starting to become neglected. With the Morgans' parliamentary and electoral interests having come to an end, the social and symbolic necessity of a county family having a town house in Brecon had also been eroded by this period. With the arrival of the railway into Brecon between 1860 and 1864, shorter stays in Brecon were also possible and accommodation for horses and coaches less necessary.

The 1887 Inventory records that there was a bust of Sir Charles Morgan in the entrance hall to emphasise the Tredegar lineage.²⁵ It is also interesting to note from the Inventory that Godfrey Morgan, the new Lord Tredegar, had chosen not to move into his father's bedroom, which is now described as the "Late Lord Tredegar's bedroom". Godfrey, who was unmarried, still slept in the bedroom he had originally occupied as the son and heir, now styled "Lord Tredegar's room" (Fig. 9), perhaps because his mother may have continued to use the room after the death of his father.



Figure 8. Drawing of Godfrey Morgan by the cartoonist J.M. Staniforth c.1911.

Western Mail

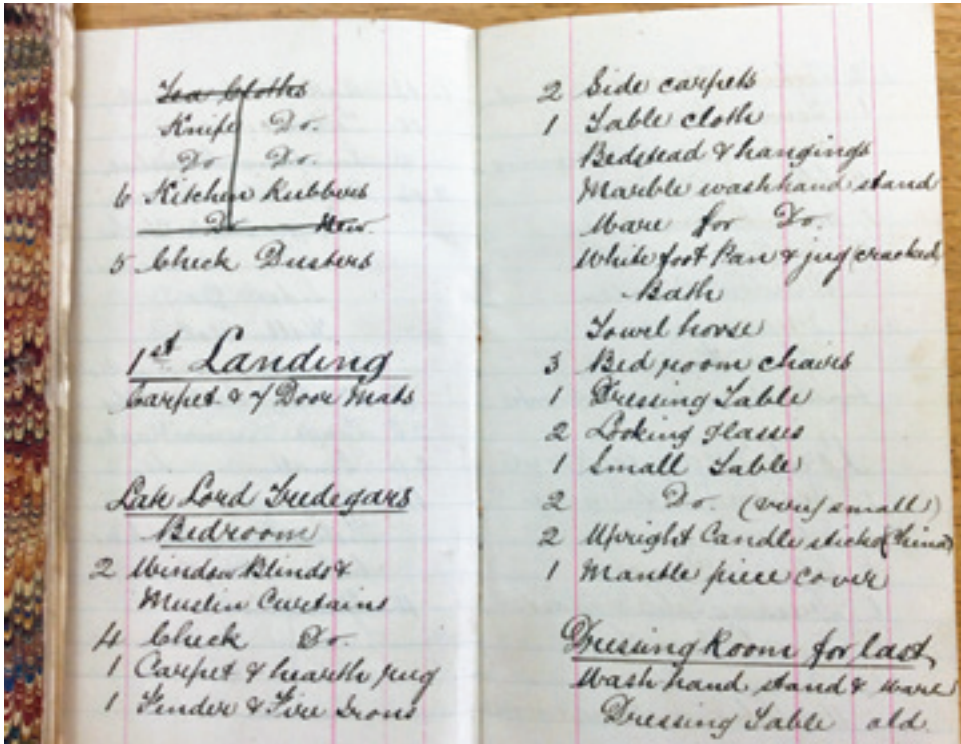


Figure 9. Extract from the 1887 Mansion House Inventory showing that Godfrey Morgan had not moved into his late father's bedroom.

National Library of Wales

The Mansion House Inventory of 1912

The 1912 Inventory was undertaken in May 1912 and the contents were still relatively static.²⁶ Godfrey Morgan had paid his final visit to Brecon as a day-trip in April 1911 to attend a Governor's meeting at Christ College.²⁷ By the time he returned to Tredegar House, he was clearly unwell. He died in March 1913 and was succeeded by his nephew, Courtney Charles Evan Morgan (Fig. 10) who was born in 1867, became third Baron Tredegar in 1913, first Viscount Tredegar (recreated) in 1926, and died in 1934.

Figure 10. Photograph of 1922 of Sir Courtney Charles Evan Morgan (1867–1934).

Victoria and Albert Museum



By then, Florence Agnes Thompson was the Housekeeper, and she may well have thought that her future was assured with the accession of a new Lord. However, annotations to the Inventory demonstrate that within a few months of Godfrey's death, in May and July 1913, items were being withdrawn from the Mansion House and sent to Tredegar House. These included 63 pewter plates and six decanters without stoppers and two with stoppers. Although these were small transfers, they mark the beginning of the end for the Morgans at the Mansion House. The Inventory records that there were prints in the dining room of Lord Tredegar, Napoleon, and Madame Adelina Patti.

Transfers of furniture from the Mansion House in 1914

With the outbreak of World War I in 1914, Courtney Morgan's large steam yacht, *Liberty*, a major interest of his, was requisitioned by the Royal Navy as a hospital ship, under an arrangement that left him, as Commanding Officer. Like the rest of the country, the Morgan household would have become preoccupied with the war.

On 13 August 1914, the Brecon County Times reported that a Detachment (Ladies) of the British Red Cross were looking for a suitable building for a hospital in Brecon and that Lord Tredegar had offered the Mansion House, although this does not seem to have been pursued.²⁸

Several lists of furniture of 1914 show very significant transfers from the Mansion House which must have virtually emptied it.²⁹ Some items (Fig. 11) were to be sent to the Soldiers Home in Watton, Brecon; others to be given to Belgian refugees who had been arriving after fleeing the German occupation of their country.³⁰ A rather nice touch is that significant items were to be given to Mrs Thompson, the Housekeeper, presumably as partial compensation for the loss of her role. These included a large table from the Dining Room, 12 chairs, a "what-not" and bookcase from the Hall, "odd" dinner napkins, a sofa, beds, mattresses, linen, rugs, and curtains; quite enough to furnish a whole house. There were also a few transfers to relatives at Y Dderw, still a Morgan property.

The transfers were organised by Lady, later Viscountess, Tredegar,



Figure 11. Extract from the 1914 Mansion House Inventory showing disposals from the Mansion House to the Soldiers' Home, Watton, Brecon, and to Belgian refugees.



(Fig. 12), the former Lady Katherine Agnes Blanche Carnegie and mother of Evan Morgan, the second Viscount, who was to be the last of the line to live at Tredegar House. Much of the furniture went to the house that Lord Tredegar had bought for his wife, Honeywell House, near Horsham in Sussex, where Lady Tredegar was principally based, rather than in Wales.

Figure 12. Oil painting by Ambrose McEvoy of c.1920 of Lady Katherine Agnes Blanche Morgan (1867–1949).

Reproduced with permission of Newport Museum and Art Gallery

Transfers of furniture from the Nant-ddu Shooting Box

As a reflection of their interests in country pursuits, the Morgans owned a Shooting Box at Nant-ddu, between Brecon and Merthyr. The building is shown on Ordnance Survey maps as “Nant-ddu Cottage” until 1889/91, but, by 1904, it is depicted as “Nant-ddu Shooting Box” (Fig. 13). There is anecdotal evidence that the Morgans used to travel by train from Newport to Pontsticill Junction, where they would be met by their coachman and driven to Nant Ddu via Vaynor and Cefn Coed. In the summer, apparently, they sometimes continued in the train to Torpantau and then rode or walked over the hills to Nant Ddu, a somewhat challenging route.³¹

The landscape and agriculture of Cwmtâf changed dramatically between 1892 and 1926 when farms and land previously owned by the Morgans were emptied and sold to Cardiff Corporation for the construction of the three large reservoirs, with dramatic effects on local communities.³² The main building of the Shooting Box is now incorporated within the vastly expanded Nant Ddu Lodge Hotel.

A list of furniture required by Lady Tredegar from Nant-Ddu provides an insight into the layout and furniture of the Shooting Box and its contents.³³ It consisted of a dining room, drawing room, Lord Tredegar’s bedroom, further bedrooms, a servants’ hall, and bath room. Although a modest facility for quite a grand family, it could be said to be a microcosm of a country house in the way that the Mansion House was a microcosm of the Tredegar House establishment. Clearly, it could accommodate Lord Tredegar, a few relatives



Figure 13. The surviving portion of the Morgans' Shooting Lodge at Nant Ddu, showing the Western curved bay which accommodated the drawing room on the ground floor and Lord Tredegar's bedroom on the first floor.

Nigel Clubb

and friends, and servants. With its mahogany wine cooler, mahogany chairs, and china cows it does seem reasonably comfortable and cosy.

The Shooting Box is probably of late-eighteenth or early-nineteenth-century date. At the western end there is a handsome curved bay of two storeys, which would have enhanced both the former drawing room on the ground floor and Lord Tredegar's bedroom on the first floor. Today, this room of the hotel is known as "Tredegar". The few remaining original features include a fireplace in the former drawing room and the staircase, which ends at the principal bedroom. These features appear to be later in the nineteenth century than the date of the Lodge building itself, which suggests a degree of modernisation having taken place.

The end of the Mansion House

The 1914 disposals of furniture from the Mansion House anticipate the sale of the Morgan estate in Breconshire from 1915. The Mansion House was purchased from Courtenay Morgan by John Powell Jones Powell for the low price of **£850**, or about £90,000 in today's values.³⁴ There was a war on, and it was not in the best of condition.³⁵ Elizabeth Powell describes that, when they moved there in 1915, it was "neglected" and "the outbuildings had stood locked and deserted for many years", including the stables and the coach

house.³⁶ The Powells moved out in 1928 and it was occupied by the Inland Revenue for several years. But in the early 1930s, the main house and the south east service wing were demolished, leaving a big gap in St Mary's Street (Fig. 14), which is still there today. The subsequent history of the surviving kitchen wing, first the Post Office, and currently occupied by Youngs' Carpet shop, has been discussed elsewhere.³⁷



Figure 14. The gap in St Mary's Street, Brecon, created by the demolition of the Mansion House (the surviving kitchen wing is to the right).

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Conclusion

From at least the seventeenth century, the Morgans owned a town house in Brecon, first the Great House and, later, the Mansion House. By the late-nineteenth century, the golden age of the land-owning families in Breconshire was passing. The Morgans' agricultural income declined, with their main income now coming from their industrial, urban, and transport interests. Electoral reform had removed their ability to exercise political and public influence based on land ownership.

The Inventories provide a valuable insight into the arrangement of the rooms and the furniture of the Mansion House between 1860 and 1914, and also reflect aspects of the house earlier in the century. It had the facilities to accommodate and entertain on a surprisingly large scale, although larger gatherings would have taken place at the Castle Hotel. There is evidence that the Mansion House was becoming less important to the Morgans in the second half of the nineteenth century and was being neglected. Godfrey Morgan's public role became increasingly ceremonial and charitable, rather than exercising real power. The Mansion House was sometimes occupied by junior

branches of the family, occasionally for several years at a time. World War I triggered removals of furniture in the year before the Breconshire estates were sold in 1915, when the Mansion House passed out of Morgan ownership and was subsequently demolished.

Aftermath

Godfrey Morgan had given away a great deal of money and Courtney Morgan not only had an extravagant lifestyle, but he was also the first Morgan to face the challenge of death duties, introduced from 1894. By 1921, the Morgans had disappeared from Breconshire, marking a significant shift from leasehold to freehold farming tenure in the county. Courtney and his son, Evan, lived on capital as well as income.³⁸ Combined with death duties, this resulted in the sale of Tredegar House in 1951 and, before long, the whole of the remaining estate in Glamorgan and Monmouthshire. In 1962, the titles of the Morgans of Tredegar became extinct.

The chief monument of the Morgans that remains in Breconshire is the Castle Hotel, much altered over time, but still in many ways a centre of the social life of Brecon and the surrounding area. Also surviving is one wing of the former Mansion House and some of the features of the Shooting Box at Nant Ddu. The main elements of the original seat of the Morgans in Breconshire, Y Dderw, also survive.

Acknowledgements

I am indebted to Helen L. Ball for sharing the fruits of her searches through local newspapers for accounts of Morgan activities in Brecon during this period and showing me the drawing of the rear elevation of the Mansion House. I am also grateful to Ken Jones for pointing out Meredith Jones' drawing of the 'Great House' in Brecon.

Notes

- ¹ Jones Powell 2016.
- ² Clubb 2017.
- ³ Bell 2014.
- ⁴ For example, see Davies 2004.
- ⁵ Jones and Smith 1964: 86-7 and Fig. 9 for plan of house.
- ⁶ Newman 2000: 562.
- ⁷ Bell 2014: 38.
- ⁸ Thomas 1960; Parry 1992-3; *Ibid.* 1994-5.
- ⁹ Jones-Davies 1967: 68.
- ¹⁰ Jones 1744. An exact survey of part of the estate of Hugh Edwards Esq: A prospect of the Great House opposite to St Mary's in Brecon belonging to Hugh Edwards Esq. West Glamorgan Archives: D/D Gw E1.
- ¹¹ For an attempt to link developments in Brecon with those in the small towns of England, see Parry 1980/1: 62-3.
- ¹² Jones 1909-30: Vol. II: 158.

- ¹³ This was drafted by Martin Cherry and published in Jones Powell 2016: 46-7.
- ¹⁴ 'Viscount Tredegar: His Life and Work' 1913.
- ¹⁵ Jones and Smith 1965: 106.
- ¹⁶ National Library of Wales (NLW) Tredegar Estate Records: ADM.
- ¹⁷ NLW Tredegar Estate Records: ADM/1.
- ¹⁸ *Monmouthshire Merlin*, 1 October 1859: 2.
- ¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 24 March 1860: 8.
- ²⁰ NLW Tredegar Estate Records: ADM/2.
- ²¹ 'Wit and Wisdom of Lord Tredegar' 1911: Frontispiece.
- ²² *Ibid.*: *passim*.
- ²³ NLW Tredegar Estate Records: ADM/3.
- ²⁴ Bank of England: Inflation Calculator, <https://www.bankofengland.co.uk/monetary-policy/inflation/inflation-calculator>. (Accessed, 1 August 2019).
- ²⁵ There is a bust of Sir Charles Morgan by John Evan Thomas at Tredegar House, but the Inventory itself does not provide sufficient detail to demonstrate that this was the bust from the Mansion House.
- ²⁶ *Ibid.*: ADM/4-5.
- ²⁷ *Brecon County Times*, 13 March 1913: 3.
- ²⁸ *Ibid.*, 13 August 1914: 5.
- ²⁹ NLW Tredegar Estate Records: ADM/3.
- ³⁰ For a local study, see Rowson 2015.
- ³¹ I am indebted to Ken Jones for this information.
- ³² Evans 2014.
- ³³ NLW Tredegar Estate Records: ADM/3.
- ³⁴ Bank of England: Inflation Calculator, <https://www.bankofengland.co.uk/monetary-policy/inflation/inflation-calculator>. (Accessed, 1 August 2019).
- ³⁵ Bell 2014: 51.
- ³⁶ Jones Powell 2016: 41, 44.
- ³⁷ Clubb 2017.
- ³⁸ Freeman 1989: 11.

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“YN IEITH EI WLAT”: THE QUESTION OF DIALECT AND THOMAS HUET’S TRANSLATION OF THE BOOK OF REVELATION¹

MARTIN ROBSON RILEY

Introduction

In this paper, I intend to look at the language used in the translation of part of the 1567 New Testament in Welsh, namely ‘Gweledigeth Ioan y Divinydd’ (the Revelation of St John the Divine), which is attributed to Thomas Huet, then Precentor of St David’s Cathedral.² Through his position at the spiritual heart of the vast diocese of St David’s, Huet has often been associated, perhaps naturally, with Pembrokeshire, but I believe this has regrettably distorted views on the linguistic quality of his work. For all his prominence at the Cathedral, Huet appears, in fact, to have had a much more personal connection with northern Breconshire and the adjacent area of Radnorshire.

As we will see, Tŷ Mawr, the home Huet apparently had built near Llysdinam, and his final resting place, originally under the chancel floor of St Afan’s Church, Llanafan Fawr, are both in Breconshire. He may even have been raised in north Breconshire, and he certainly had family ties with the midland counties of Wales. It may be expected, therefore, that any dialectal quality of his prose should reflect the Welsh of his home district, rather than that spoken in the far south-west, in the vicinity of St David’s Cathedral. The premise of this paper is, therefore, to look at Thomas Huet’s translation in the light of modern studies of the Welsh of Breconshire and Pembrokeshire, and to see where any similarities might lie.

‘Gweledigeth Ioan y Divinydd’

On 7 October 1567, at a small printing house in London, one of the glories of the Welsh language was published: *Testament Newydd ein Arglwydd Jesu Christ*, the first complete version of the New Testament in Welsh. This was essentially the work of one man, William Salesbury, who was arguably the greatest humanist scholar of the Renaissance period in Wales.³ Although Salesbury is rightly praised for the production of this great milestone in Welsh literary history, it must be remembered that he was aided in his task by two other men, namely Richard Davies, Bishop of St David’s, and Thomas Huet.⁴

It is the work of Thomas Huet that concerns us here for, whilst his contribution was relatively small, it is significant for the dialectologist since it displays many features of the colloquial spoken language at that time. Indeed, Huet’s version of ‘Gweledigeth Ioan y Divinydd’ is seen as one of the earliest pieces of dialect writing in Welsh (Fig. 1), and his style and language have often drawn scholarly comment. Salesbury himself thought it important to refer to the dialectal

Brycheiniog, 2020, Volume LI, pages 69–95.

nature of the translation, commenting in one of the initial marginalia: “T.H.C.M. a translatoedd oll text yr Apocalypsis yn ieith ei wlat”.⁵



Figure 1. Opening from *Testament Newydd ein Arglwydd Jesu Christ* showing the beginning of Huet’s ‘Gweledigaeth Ioan y Ddwydydd’.

Llyfrgell Genedlaethol Cymru / The National Library of Wales

Many academics have regarded Huet’s writing as displaying characteristic features associated with the Welsh dialects of South Wales, and, particularly, with Dyfed.⁶ The renowned biblical scholar, Isaac Thomas, asserted that “one cannot read far in his [Huet’s] version without hearing the music of the Demetian dialect”⁷, a view more recently echoed by Meic Stephens who tells us that Huet “ventured to translate into the Demetian (Dyfed) dialect of Welsh”.⁸

In 1926, W.J. Gruffydd referred to the fact that Huet was a southerner, although he initially appeared slightly more cautious in his assessment, saying only that “efallai yn ŵr o Ddyfed”⁹, before going on to declare some of the forms employed in the translation as being good evidence of Huet’s Dyfed origin, noting, “Y mae’n debyg bod geiriau fel sirthiasont, ywchel, heblaw’r gymysgfa ar yr u a’r y, yn profi mai gŵr o Ddyfed ydoedd”.¹⁰

Much emphasis has been placed on the spellings that Huet used in his work, together with particularly distinctive words, as being illustrative of the typical features of phonology and lexis found in the dialect of Dyfed today. Many academics have listed these items and elements, some of which are also seen as

being slightly archaic, even for the date at which Huet was writing.¹¹ In 1902, D.R. Thomas informed us that Huet, when compared with the work of his co-translators:

indulges more largely than the others, in proportion to his matter, in obsolescent words and localisms, such as Dabre (digle), syna, plocyn, ffrogaed, siriyys, ywchel, doyddyblic, hollallvawr, allwyddeu, hoyl, ddwad, ceseir, which bespeak not only his Southern nationality, but also his local dialect, "iaith ei wlat".¹²

It is certainly true that Huet's translation contains some lexical items that are definitely identifiable as being southern, though these are not, in fact, that numerous. Further, although his work does contain some older forms, when compared with Salesbury's contributions, Huet's work actually has relatively few archaisms. One of the main characteristics contained in Huet's translation, and one that has been ascribed to Dyfed in particular, is his use of distinctive vowel combinations which are not part of the modern standard language. This is at its most obvious in renderings of 'dau' as 'doy' (two), 'haul' as 'hoyl' (sun), 'llais' as 'lleis' (voice) and 'saith' as 'seith' (seven).¹³ It seems that Huet's aim in using these forms was to produce a translation in a type of Welsh that was as natural and as close to the spoken language, as he knew it, as possible. This orthographic aspect of his style, however, has received much criticism, with R. Geraint Gruffydd being of the following opinion:

Nid urddas Cymraeg hynafol a Lladinaidd a welir yn fersiwn Huet ond eglurder iaith lafar gyfarwydd. Yn anffodus, ond yn anochel, iaith lafar gyfarwydd i Gymry Dyfed yn unig sydd gan Huet; ac o'i hargraffu mewn orgraff seinegol, yr oedd lawn mor anodd ei darllen a'i deall gan Gymry yn gyffredinol ag ydoedd geirfa hynafol ac orgraff anseinegol Salesbury.¹⁴

It is difficult to judge Gruffydd's words as, by 1588, Salesbury's *Testament Newydd* had been replaced by *Y Beibl Cyssegr-lan, sef yr Hen Destament, a'r Newydd*, a new translation of the whole Bible by William Morgan. Almost all the distinctive lexis and spellings of Huet's translation were removed by Morgan and replaced with what may be seen as more widely known forms and by what would later be considered a more standard kind of orthography.¹⁵ Nevertheless, the work of Thomas Huet remains extremely important, especially as it gives us an opportunity to assess the vernacular nature of at least one form of language in Wales in the mid to late sixteenth century.

Dyfed: a question of definition

As we have seen, many scholars have seen the dialectal quality of Huet's writing as belonging to the southern dialects of the language, specifically a dialect of Dyfed.¹⁶ It is therefore important to explore exactly what they mean by this.

Returning to the marginal comment of Salesbury, as editor of the translation, there is some ambiguity in the phrase he employed: “yn ieith ei wlat”. It has been assumed that he was referring to the dialect of Huet’s own area, literally ‘in the language of his country’, which is indeed the most logical explanation, but what is meant by the word ‘gwlat’ in this context? Was Salesbury simply referring to ‘the South’ in contrast to ‘the North’, from where both he and his co-translator Richard Davies hailed? Or was he pointing to a much more specific area of the country?

W.J. Gruffydd obviously thought there was no real need for Salesbury’s marginal reference at all, saying “Yn wir, ni buasai raid esbonio mai ‘iaith ei wlad’ oedd gan Huet oherwydd dengys pob adnod bron olion geirfa a chystrawen y De”.¹⁷ But perhaps to see it as defining the whole of South Wales is an over-simplification. After all, ‘gwlad’ (land/country) was a term that had a specific meaning, especially in the Middle Ages, and was usually used to refer to a particular territorial division of Wales.¹⁸ If this is what Salesbury was hinting at, to which of the possible ‘gwledydd’ of Wales did Huet’s “ieith” belong?

The premise has always been that this is a reference to the ancient area of ‘Dyfed’ (Demetia). But this definition presents some difficulty, since defining ‘Dyfed’, particularly in linguistic terms, can be subjective. Some use it to refer solely to the ancient gwlad of Dyfed, which roughly corresponds to the modern county of Pembrokeshire, whilst others use it for a much wider area encompassing the whole of south-west Wales. The term for the dialect itself, ‘Dyfedeg’ (Demetian), is, consequently, used equally to mean both the Welsh language of south-west Wales in general, and the specific form found in north Pembrokeshire; the southern half of that county having been overwhelmingly English-speaking since the Middle Ages. The predominant viewpoint is that Huet spoke a form of Pembrokeshire Welsh, an assumption made, I suspect, not only because of the obvious southern quality of the language he used, but also, in part, from the fact that he was the Precentor of St David’s Cathedral.¹⁹ But the question remains: was the Welsh dialect of Pembrokeshire the dialect of Thomas Huet?

Thomas Huet: Rector and Cantor

In order to address this, we must look not only at the text of Huet’s translation, but also at the man himself. It seems certain that Huet hailed from the southern half of the country and, as such, he was the only one of the Welsh Bible translators who did. Not only did Salesbury and Davies both come from North Wales but all the subsequent major translators of the Bible have also been North Walians; their statues, along with Huet, being part of the elaborate Victorian ‘Translators’ Memorial’ outside St Asaph Cathedral²⁰ (Fig. 2).



Figure 2. Thomas Huet on the 'Translators' Memorial', St Asaph Cathedral.

Peter Hughes, copyright flickr: sgwarnog2010

Little is known of Huet's early life, or of when or where he was born. R. Geraint Gruffydd said "ni wyddys ddim am ei dras nag o ble y deuai"²¹; which was generally thought to be the case when he was writing. However, documents relating to a legal dispute from the Court of Chancery, involving Thomas Huet the Precentor and land in Northamptonshire, shed important light on this matter.²² In his Bill of Complaint against John Neale, and others, Huet tells us that his grandfather was "one Roger Huet of Newnton Bromsold in the cowntie of northampton", i.e. Newton Bromswold in Northamptonshire, on its border

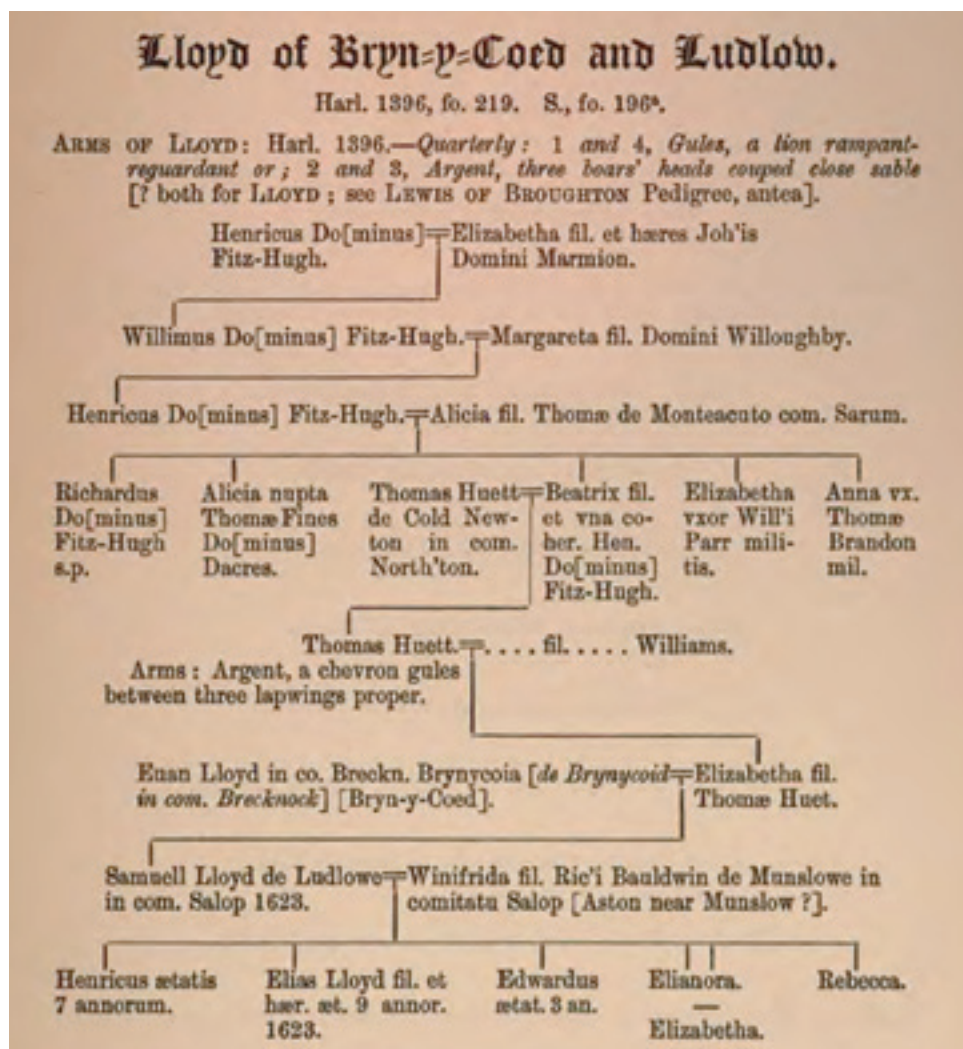


Figure 3. Pedigree chart showing Thomas Huet the Precentor and his daughter Elizabeth, along with his parents Thomas Huet senior and Beatrix Fitz-Hugh.

with Bedfordshire. He also tells us that his father was “one Thomas Huet”. In his Replication to the Answer of John Neale, et al., Thomas Huet further states that his father had at some time “dep[ar]tyd from his native cuntry into Wales” and that Huet himself “was brought vp at Scole in Wales”. The Northamptonshire origin of Thomas Huet senior is confirmed by a pedigree for the Lloyd family of Bryn-y-Coed in Brecknockshire, arising from an Heraldic Visitation of Shropshire taken in 1623 (Fig. 3). This not only shows what would seem to be Thomas Huet the Precentor, and his daughter Elizabeth, the wife of Evan Lloyd, but also Thomas’ father “Thomas Huett de Cold Newton in com. North’ton”.²³

It is assumed Huet had some sort of university education, though the details of exactly which university he attended and what qualifications he obtained are confused, with some authorities favouring Cambridge²⁴ and others Oxford.²⁵ In his contributions to the biographical dictionaries of the Honourable Society of Cymmrodorion, Glanmor Williams gives Oxford in the Welsh version²⁶ and Cambridge in the English²⁷; and, although the latter seems likely it is, in fact, far from certain. At what date he was ordained into the priesthood is not known, but it has been stated he was Master of the Holy Trinity College in Pontefract, Yorkshire, and, after its dissolution, was in receipt of a pension in 1555.²⁸

According to published biographical sources, Huet is first recorded in Wales in 1556, when he was made Rector of the Radnorshire parishes of Llanfihangel Cefnlllys and Llanbadarn Fawr in Maelienydd²⁹ (Fig. 4). A few years later, he appears to have been in favour as he was granted the Prebendary and Rectory of Llanbadarn Trefeglwys in Cardiganshire in 1559 and was also made Rector of Diserth Glan Gwy in Radnorshire the following year. On 27 April 1561, he was elevated to the important position of Precentor in St David’s Cathedral, the spiritual centre of his diocese.³⁰ Four years later, he was apparently further rewarded with the Prebendaries of Llanfihangel Ystrad in Cardiganshire and Llandeglau in Radnorshire, and, in 1566, he was even recommended for the

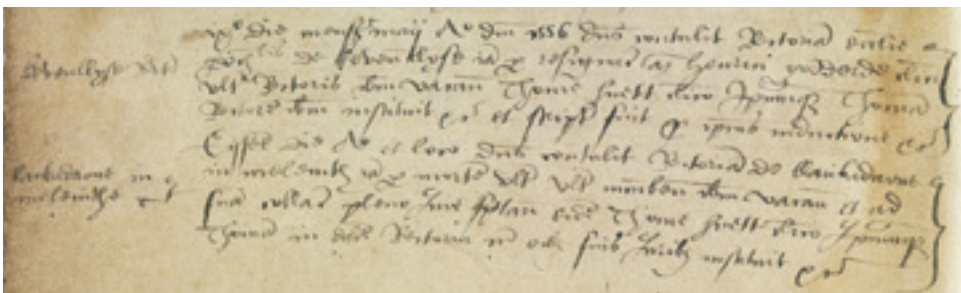


Figure 4. Manuscript entry from the Bishop’s Register for St David’s showing the institution of Thomas Huet to the Rectories of “kevenllyse” and “llanbadarne in melenithe” in Radnorshire.

Bishopric of Bangor.³¹ In a report of his diocese in 1570, Bishop Richard Davies describes Huet, and the offices and benefices he held, as follows:

professor of Dyvynytië and learned also in the ecclyasticall lawes, ys com'yssi'ie in tharchdeaconrye of Brecknock ...³², Chauntor of S^t Davies, p'sonne of Dysserthe, llandegle and llanbaderne, all w^{ch} sp'uall lyving do amount to the yerly value of lvijⁱ xvij^s [=£57.17s].³³

This would have been a handsome sum for a clergyman in the sixteenth century and Huet seems to have used his income to build a large house, called *Tŷ Mawr*, in the township of Llysdinam, which was part of the Breconshire parish of Llanafan Fawr, close to his Radnorshire parishes³⁴ (Fig. 5). Shortly



Figure 5. *Tŷ Mawr*, Llysdinam.

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after the 1570 survey of the diocese, he was granted “a dispensation from residing above two months in ye year at Kevenllys or St David’s”³⁵ though no obvious reasons are given as to why this should have been the case.³⁶ Little is known of him in his later years³⁷, although it seems he held the office of Precentor at St David’s, and his rectorship of Diserth, until his death at his home on 19 August 1591. He was laid to rest in the chancel of the parish church at Llanafan Fawr,



Figure 6. Thomas Huet’s memorial plaque in St Afan’s Church, Llanafan Fawr.

Bill Nicholls, copyright ‘The Church Explorer’ blog

under a great stone slab that had formerly been part of the altar. There was no specific memorial inscription until more recent times (Fig. 6), just five simple crosses incised into the stone.³⁸

In 1966, the folk historian Ffransis George Payne wrote of “Thomas Huett”³⁹ that “Brodor oedd o Lanfihangel Brynpabuan”⁴⁰ (Fig. 7). Unfortunately, he gives no reference for this statement, but Llanfihangel Brynpabuan is the parish next to that of Llanafan Fawr in which Huet had his house near Llysdinam. Further, it seems likely that Huet lived at a house called Aberduhonw,⁴¹ also in Breconshire (Fig. 8)—a property that had formerly belonged to the monastery of Strata Florida—before he apparently built Tŷ Mawr. There is also evidence that Huet had family ties in this area, including the fact that his daughters, Marged and Elizabeth, appear to have married local gentry.⁴² In addition, it seems that he had a brother, Rhys Huet, through whose daughter, Tŷ Mawr later passed into the Gwynne family of Bryn Ioiau.⁴³

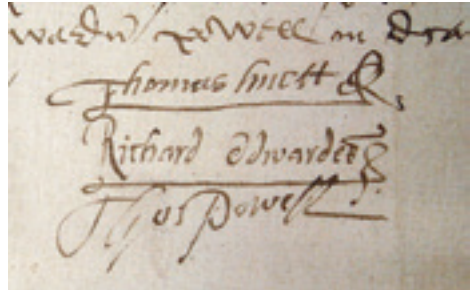


Figure 7. Thomas Huet's own signature from 1574, where he spelt his surname as “Huett”.
Llyfrgell Genedlaethol Cymru /
The National Library of Wales



Figure 8. Aberduhonw, near Builth.

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As to his position as Precentor at the Cathedral, it appears this would have been twofold, firstly as the priest in charge of the cathedral choir, and secondly, because St David's was without a Dean, as the head of the Cathedral's chapter.⁴⁴ Whilst he undoubtedly spent some time at St David's in this position, this would not have required Huet to be in permanent residence in Pembrokeshire, a point borne out by the special 'dispensation' later granted to him.⁴⁵ Rather, it was in Breconshire and Radnorshire that he lived, worked, and eventually died.⁴⁶ It seems more likely, therefore, that Thomas Huet had his roots in the 'gwlad' of 'Rhwng Gwy a Hafren'⁴⁷ rather than that of Dyfed.

Dialect: what can Huet's translation tell us?

By examining various distinctive words, and other features found in Huet's work, and comparing these with known regional variations in the language today, it is possible to give some indication of which dialect area these features best fit, whether that be north Pembrokeshire or north Breconshire. Sadly, little information is available on the Welsh of Radnorshire, due to intensive pressures of Anglicisation, with the result that the local dialect of the county is now moribund.⁴⁸ Before examining the relevant linguistic features of the text of the Book of Revelation, as presented by Thomas Huet, certain points should be considered regarding the text itself and the way it has been examined for the purposes of this paper.

Salesbury's original work was printed in the black lettering that was common at the time, although it is important to note that he used a Roman typeface in the body of the text to highlight variations in pronunciation or additional words.⁴⁹ Salesbury also used two notation markers, the asterisk (*) and the double dagger (‡), to point out variations in idiom and lexicon in the body of the text, giving alternatives or explanations in marginal glosses. Indeed, on the title page of the *Testament Newydd* he addresses the use of these markers and the marginalia:

Y mae pop gair a dybiwyt y vot yn andeallus, ai o ran llediaith y 'wlat, ai o ancynefinder y devnydd, wedy ei noti ai eglurhau ar 'ledemyl y tu dalen gydrychiol.⁵⁰

The first of these is particularly important with regard to Huet's translation since, in practice, Salesbury's addition of letters 'corrects' many of the features of the language Huet uses. But by making these alterations in such a distinctive way, it is possible to remove them to give a clearer picture of Huet's work and the forms that he originally used. The second feature, that of the notation markers and the marginalia, helps us to assess Huet's particular idiom and the choice of words he made against those alternatives given by Salesbury. However, the words in these marginalia are not directly the subject of our investigation as they represent the input of Salesbury, not Huet, and they are therefore generally omitted here.

Lexical items considered

All the examples quoted below are referenced in the Notes with the relevant chapter and verse numbers, e.g. Huet 1567: Pen. iij. 6. 'Pen.' standing for 'Pennod' (Chapter); these being given in Roman numerals and the verse numbers in Arabic numerals. These are as they appear in the text shown in *Detholion o Destament Newydd 1567* (pages 66-102), which is a faithful reproduction of the original work.⁵¹ In some cases, the verse numbers in the text are incorrect and I have therefore added the correct ones in square brackets, e.g. Huet 1567: Pen. ix. 16 [19]. The use of 'iiij' for 'iv' has not been altered, as this was the convention at that time. I have addressed each item individually, comparing the forms used in Huet's translation against known geographical patterns of distribution in the light of various works and investigative studies on the Modern Welsh dialects.

'*whedlea*' (to talk, to speak):

In the text, this is found as '*chwedlea*',⁵² where Salesbury has added the initial '*c*' to Huet's original spelling.⁵³ The modern literary spelling of this word is '*chwedleua*', but in the spoken language it appears in several forms, and as such is restricted almost entirely to the southern half of the country. The main southern form is '*whilia*', with the phonological variant of '*wilia*' predominant in the south-east, especially in Glamorganshire where in some dialects "Ni chlywid y gair siarad byth".⁵⁴ The south-west has the two distinctive forms: '*gwleia*' in Pembrokeshire⁵⁵; and '*loia*' in Cardiganshire.⁵⁶ Huet's use of this word, therefore, is certainly an indication of southern speech but in this form is not particularly identifiable with any one area and is not specifically connected with the Welsh of Pembrokeshire today.

'*heol*' (street):

Both '*heol*'⁵⁷, and its plural '*heolydd*'⁵⁸, are typically southern words, with northern dialects favouring '*ffordd*'/'*ffyrdd*' (road/s) and '*lôn*'/'*lonydd*' (lane/s). *The Linguistic Geography of Wales* shows that the word, and its variant '*hewl*', are used across almost all of the south, with the exception of western Pembrokeshire where it is replaced in this meaning by the form '*ffor(dd)*'.⁵⁹ In Pembrokeshire '*heol*', generally in the form '*hiol*', carries the alternative meaning of 'farmyard'.⁶⁰ Again, Huet's use of this item is in keeping with most of the southern dialects in general but apparently not with the current dialect of Pembrokeshire.

'*cwny*' (to rise):

The word '*cwny*'⁶¹ is another particularly southern form and is generally now spelled '*cwnnu*'. The more literary word is '*cyfodi*', which occurs across much of the country in the form '*codi*'. *Geiriadur yr Academi* ascribes '*cwnnu*' simply to South Wales⁶² and even *Geiriadur Prifysgol Cymru* merely says it is "Ar lafar

yn gyff. yn y Deau".⁶³ It is, however, now recorded more often in the south-east than in the south-west, particularly in Glamorganshire.⁶⁴ Huet's choice of this form is consequently indicative of the southern dialects, but again it is not an example of a word confined solely to Pembrokeshire Welsh.

'can' (flour):

This appears in the text as "a †chan man"⁶⁵, with Salesbury's marginalia giving "†pheillied, fflwr", and in this context means 'fine flour'. The northern, and standard, word for flour is 'blawd', with the English borrowing of 'fflwr' occurring across western and south-western Wales. Today, 'can' is given as the predominant form only in south-east Wales⁶⁶ and is also recorded in north Breconshire alongside 'fflwr'.⁶⁷ The word was originally an adjective meaning 'white' and only later acquired the meaning of 'flour', probably through such forms as 'blawd can', which has been found in Glamorganshire. It should also be noted that whilst a similar combination, 'fflwr can', is found in Pembrokeshire, it is only in the south-east that the word 'can' is used independently to mean 'flour'.⁶⁸ Huet's usage of this word, therefore, fits better with the pattern in the south-east than in the south-west, but it cannot be ruled out that such a form was not previously also used in Pembrokeshire before the encroachment of the English loan word.

'ffrogaed' (frogs):

As a plural of another obviously southern word, 'ffrogaed'⁶⁹ is found in several different and related forms. Two of the forms have initial 'ff-', 'ffrogan' which is found in south-east Wales, and 'ffroga(s)' which is found in Pembrokeshire. Both use 'ffrogaed' as their plural. A third variation is 'broga', with either 'brogod' or 'brogaed' as its plural, which occurs in the remainder of the south.⁷⁰ All three variants come from the Middle English word 'frogge'.⁷¹ Because Huet only uses the plural, it is difficult to say if this represents the south-eastern or the south-western form; it is only possible to say that it is certainly evidence of southern usage, rather than northern, where the native form 'llyffant' (toad/frog) is dominant, with the plurals 'llyffaint' and 'llyffantod'.⁷²

'cwplay' (to finish, to complete):

Huet's 'cwplay'⁷³ is obviously the word 'cwpláu' ('cwblhau'), which is more commonly pronounced as 'cwpla'. Today, this is characteristically a south-eastern word but is found as far north as Breconshire where it is recorded as 'cwpla' and 'cwbla'.⁷⁴ The dominant modern form over much of south-west Wales is a totally different word, 'bennu', from 'dibennu' (to end/to terminate), with the variant 'penni' being the major form in Pembrokeshire.⁷⁵ Huet thereby shows a tendency towards the south-east rather than the south-west in his choice of this word.

'eiste' (to sit):

The full form of 'eiste'⁷⁶ is 'eistedd' with a final 'dd'. Huet is consistent in his use of the form without 'dd', some examples of which have been 'corrected' by Salesbury to the fuller form, as in 'eistedd'⁷⁷, but many of which have not. The loss of a final 'dd' is a strong characteristic feature in Pembrokeshire Welsh, with forms such as 'mwni', 'newy' and 'tewy' for 'mynydd', 'newydd' and 'tywydd' (mountain, new, and weather) occurring.⁷⁸ This feature is not, however, restricted solely to that dialect; and two items that regularly lose the final 'dd' throughout Wales are 'eistedd' and 'dydd'.⁷⁹ Huet's use of this form is, therefore, in keeping with a general trend and is not particular to any single dialect. It should also be noted that he retains the final 'dd' in other words such as 'newydd'⁸⁰ (new) and 'dydd'⁸¹ (day).

'yddy' (to his/her):

The form 'yddy'⁸² is an alternative realisation of 'i'w' ('i', 'to' + 'ei', 'his'/'her') and is one that seems to have evolved particularly in the southern Welsh dialects⁸³, first appearing in the Middle Welsh period where it is found as 'yðy', an example of which is "ydy vam" (to his mother) in *Chwedleu Seith Doethon Rufein* (the Seven Sages of Rome).⁸⁴ The modern spelling of this form is 'iddi'⁸⁵, and, as such, is accepted as a characteristic dialect feature of southern Welsh. It is more frequent in the south-east than the south-west and is not normally found in Pembrokeshire. Today, it normally appears as a recessive feature, and, as such, its use in the dialect of Pembrokeshire in the past cannot be ruled out. Huet's use of this form, therefore, is best seen as adhering to southern Welsh in general and not to one particular dialect.

'cwympto' (to fall):

The word 'cwympto'⁸⁶, and its more colloquial variant 'cwmpo', is the overwhelmingly dominant form across the whole of south Wales, extending northwards to also include much of mid-Wales. In the north, however, two forms are found, namely 'syrthio' (fall down) and 'disgyn' (fall/descend).⁸⁷ Huet also uses conjugated forms of this verb such as 'cwympeist'⁸⁸ (thou fell), but in addition he has forms of the northern word 'syrthio', such as 'syrthiasont'⁸⁹ (they fell) and 'syrth'⁹⁰ (it fell). It appears that he may actually be drawing a semantic difference between the two, using those based on 'cwympto' to mean 'fall from' and those containing 'syrthio' to convey 'fall down' or 'fall upon'. His use of the northern form is not what would be expected, given the wide distribution of 'cwympto', though it may be that 'syrthio' was formerly used further south than is currently found today. It is, however, most unlikely that it was common to the dialect of Pembrokeshire. Further, it should be noted that the only form recorded in northern Breconshire now is 'cwmpo'.⁹¹

'ceseir' (hailstones):

Another classically southern word is 'ceseir'⁹², normally now spelled 'cesair' in the standard language, though being invariably pronounced as 'ceser' across most of South Wales. It is distributed across the entire southern half of the country, with two variant forms, 'cesel' and 'cesal', occurring in the south-east. The predominant northern word is 'cenllys(g)' which meets the southern word in mid-Wales.⁹³ The fact that these two words seem to converge where they do may be significant, for as well as using this southern form, we also find both 'cenllysc', in "a †chenllysc mawr"⁹⁴ (and great hail), and 'cenllys', in "cenllys mawr" (great hail) and "am plaae yr cenllys"⁹⁵ (for the plague of the hail), in Huet's translation. The use of 'cenllysg' alongside 'cesair' suggests that Huet was equally familiar with both words and may indicate that his dialect is more likely to pertain to the transitional area where these forms meet, than to the extreme south-west where only 'cesair' is usually found.

'allan' (out):

The word 'allan'⁹⁶ is another typically northern form, the southern equivalent being 'mâs', which is derived from 'i maes'. These two words each predominate in their respective halves of the country, with a significant area of overlap in north Cardiganshire.⁹⁷ This transitional area may well have formerly extended into Radnorshire and, whilst 'allan' has literary currency today, it would seem significant that Huet used only this form and never 'i maes'⁹⁸, which one might have expected had he spoken the dialect of Pembrokeshire. It should also be noted that he only used the northern 'tu allan' (outside), which appears in the text as "ac or tu allan"⁹⁹ (and on the outside), and not the southern 'tu fâs'.

'y vyny' (upwards):

In the text this word is generally found as "y vynydd"¹⁰⁰ where the 'dd' has been added by Salesbury.¹⁰¹ As already mentioned, the loss of the final 'dd' is a feature of the Pembrokeshire dialect, but, as in the case of 'eiste', its loss here is common to most Welsh dialects. Indeed, this particular word is the prevailing northern form used to express upwards motion, the dominant southern equivalent being 'lan', from 'i'r lan'¹⁰², which is a mutated form of the word 'glan' (shore, edge or hill), prefixed by 'to the'. One line in Huet's work does contain the form 'lan', and this has been evidenced by notable academics, such as W. J. Gruffydd and Isaac Thomas, as an example of the southern nature of Huet's dialect. The key phrase which contains this word is "y †lan ywchel vawr"¹⁰³, for which Salesbury has added the marginalia "† vynydd". This, however, does not convey the figurative sense of 'up', as the word here is a noun, so rather it translates the meaning 'to a great high hill', fitting with Salesbury's marginal word which, in this instance, would mean 'a mountain'. This use of 'lan' in exactly the same sense is noted in an almost contemporary

work in the hand of Llywelyn Siôn of Llangewydd in Glamorganshire, where we find “a vo'n sevyll ar lann uchel”.¹⁰⁴ Returning to the form “y vyny”, it should be noted here that ‘i fini’ has been evidenced in Pembrokeshire but that this appears to have a different semantic use, occurring as a component particle in verbal formations such as ‘rhoi i fini’, ‘to give up’.¹⁰⁵ Huet’s use of ‘i fyny’ is therefore more in keeping with northern usage than southern, or indeed Pembrokeshire, and his use of “lan” to mean specifically ‘a hill’ may be seen as an older form that is, perhaps, more connected with the south-east in this context.

‘dala’ (to hold):

Huet’s translation contains five examples of ‘dala’¹⁰⁶, this word being another characteristic southern form, compared with the northern version which is simply ‘dal’.¹⁰⁷ Accordingly, ‘dala’ is the form that is consistently used in Pembrokeshire.¹⁰⁸ However out of the five examples, two are, in fact, imperative forms, these being “dala yn *sicker”¹⁰⁹ (hold fast) and “dala’r peth y sydd genyd”¹¹⁰ (hold the thing that thou hast). As such, both can be found in both southern or northern dialects; though those in the south-east, in Glamorganshire, Breconshire, and eastern Carmarthenshire, tend to use imperatives without the ‘-a’ suffix.¹¹¹ There is also one further instance in the text, but which has an additional ‘a’ added to it by Salesbury, so that it appears as ‘dala’.¹¹² Therefore, whilst Huet generally uses the southern ‘dala’, the fact his text also has ‘dal’ would not seem wholly consistent with what would be expected if his dialect was that of the far south-west.¹¹³

‘mellt’ (lightning):

This is another item with an overwhelmingly northern bias in the Welsh dialects and appears in the text in combination with ‘traney’, i.e. ‘taranau’ (thunder), as in “A’ †mellt a thraney”¹¹⁴ (and lightning and thunder) and “a †thraney, a’ mellt”¹¹⁵ (and thunder, and lightning), for which Salesbury’s marginalia gives ‘† lluchedene’ and ‘† llucheie’ (lightning flashes) respectively. The word is recorded across most of mid-Wales as well as the north, and also stretches into most of Cardiganshire as well as parts of Carmarthenshire and Breconshire.¹¹⁶ This distribution of ‘mellt’ is most interesting and appears to be one of a small number of lexical items that Cantref Buellt in Breconshire shares with areas lying to its west and north, as opposed to the rest of the county, and the south in general, where ‘llyched’ (lightning flash) or ‘goleuni’ (bolt of light) are used.¹¹⁷ The south-west has a most distinctive way of conveying lightning, using the verbs ‘towlu’, i.e. ‘taflu’ (throw), and ‘bwrw’ (strike) in combination with ‘golau’ (light), or ‘tân’ (fire), to mean literally ‘throwing/striking light/fire’. The forms ‘towlu gole’ and ‘bwrw gole’ are found in Pembrokeshire, with ‘towlu tân’ being the specific version in the St David’s area.¹¹⁸

‘tŵrŵf’ (thunder):

As already mentioned, Huet used the plural form ‘traney’ for ‘thunder’ in the combinations detailed above, but he also used the singular form of another word, namely ‘tŵrŵf’, i.e. ‘tŵrf’ (thunderous roar), in such lines as “y seith *tŵrŵf y †wneythont y lleisey”¹¹⁹ (the seven thunders made their voices). *The Linguistic Geography of Wales* does not deal with this item but *Atlas Geirfaol Brycheiniog* does, containing the form ‘tŵrw’ which it regards as a phonological variant of ‘tŵrf’. The word is noted as occurring in the area of Cantref Buellt, where ‘tarane’ is also found. The prominent southern words in the rest of the county are the plural versions of ‘tyrfe’ and ‘tyrfa’.¹²⁰ These facts, together with the observations on ‘mellt’ above, show that Huet’s use of this form fits well with the dialect pattern of north Breconshire, rather than having anything obvious to link it with Pembrokeshire.

‘cwpa’ (cup):

This is a particularly interesting lexical item and appears in the text as ‘cwppan’¹²¹, Salesbury adding the final ‘n’ to Huet’s original form. The recognised standard literary word for a ‘cup’ today is of course ‘cwpan’, though in Welsh dialects it is found primarily in the northern half of the country with some sporadic occurrences in the south, the main southern equivalents being ‘dish’ and ‘dyshgil’ (dish). The form ‘cwpa’, however, has a small but significant geographical distribution across central Cardiganshire, northern Carmarthenshire, and adjacent parts of Breconshire.¹²² Within Breconshire, the word seems confined to the northern part of the county, giving way to ‘dishgil’ only in the southern half.¹²³ Whilst ‘cwpan’ does occur in Pembrokeshire, the dominant local form is ‘dish’, with the local variation of ‘tedish’ (teadish) recorded in the vicinity of St David’s.¹²⁴ The fact that Huet used ‘cwpa’ as against any other forms suggests a more likely link with the dialect of northern Breconshire and not that of Pembrokeshire.

‘pren’ (tree):

Huet uses ‘pren’¹²⁵, rather than today’s more common ‘coeden’, to mean tree, although he does also use the plural form of the latter, “*coed”¹²⁶ (trees), to which Salesbury has added “*preneu” in the margin. Often in the text, the word appears as a compound form for a particular type of tree, such as “pren ffeigys”¹²⁷ (fig tree) and “bren-olif”¹²⁸ (olive tree). Two regions in which ‘pren’ has been instanced, both as a general term for a tree and in the compound ‘pren fale’ (apple tree), are along the northern part of the Welsh/English border, in eastern Montgomeryshire, and in Breconshire.¹²⁹ *Atlas Geirfaol Brycheiniog* confirms the use of ‘pren’ in Breconshire across much of the county and also notes other forms involving ‘coeden’ and ‘llwyn’ (bush/thicket).¹³⁰ The fact that areas either side of Radnorshire use ‘pren’ suggests that this was also formerly

the word used in the dialect of that county. Pembrokeshire, on the other hand, today almost exclusively only uses 'llwyn' in this context.¹³¹ Once again, Huet's usage conforms more to Breconshire, and probably Radnorshire, in this instance, and not to the Welsh of Pembrokeshire.

'mwrddwr' (murder):

The word "mwrddwr"¹³² is an obvious English borrowing and has often been found in other works where it is attested in various spellings such as 'mwrdder' and 'mwrddwr'.¹³³ Indeed, the form 'mwrddwr' is still very much in colloquial use today.¹³⁴ In Pembrokeshire, this same word is recorded, but here 'mwrddwr' does not appear to have the meaning of 'murder'; rather, it meant 'a murderer'.¹³⁵ The fact that Huet uses this word only to mean 'murder' and not 'a murderer' means that, again, his dialect does not appear to obviously fit with that of Pembrokeshire.

'abyl' (to be able):

This is another loan word from English and, in the text, Huet uses it in lines such as "yn abyl y agoryd y Llyfr"¹³⁶ (was able to open the Book) and "yn abyl y vyned y mew'n yr demel"¹³⁷ (was able to enter into the temple), where it clearly has the same sense as the current English one. In fact, the word 'abl', or 'abal', is still commonly used with this meaning in spoken Welsh, particularly in the border areas such as eastern Montgomeryshire.¹³⁸ Pembrokeshire, however, is once more out of step with other dialects where the word has a different, and indeed much older, meaning of 'rich, well-to-do' or 'wealthy'.¹³⁹ Again, Huet's use of this word indicates that his dialect may well have been a border one.

Pronunciation features

Finally, it is important to consider the use of certain vowel combinations which represent the distinctly southern pronunciation of particular words. Examples contained in Huet's translation include 'bowyd' (life), as in "allan o Lyfr y bowyd"¹⁴⁰ (out of the Book of Life); 'cowir' (correct), as found in "santeidd a chowir"¹⁴¹ (holy and true); and 'hoil' (sun), which appears in "y wyneb ef mal yr *hoil"¹⁴² (his face like the sun). We may also add the word for 'two', found as 'doi'¹⁴³ and 'doy'¹⁴⁴ as well as in compounds like 'doyddeng'¹⁴⁵ (twelve) and 'doycant'¹⁴⁶ (two hundred). Many of these forms have been noted in the southwestern dialects, such as 'hoil' and 'doi'¹⁴⁷, and 'cowir' has also been recorded in the Welsh of Pembrokeshire].¹⁴⁸

Isaac Thomas addressed many of the distinctive features of pronunciation represented in Huet's orthography in his own in-depth study of *Y Testament Newydd Cymraeg* in 1976. Whilst ascribing them to 'Y Ddyfedeg' (the Demetian), he added in a footnote that some of the forms could be found "mewn

tafodieithoedd heblaw'r Ddyfedeg".¹⁴⁹ In fact, the particular feature noted above is found across most of the southern half of the country, and one of the areas with the highest incidence is Cantref Buellt in north Breconshire.¹⁵⁰ Professor Thomas Powel was one of the first to recognise this particular pronunciation in 'North-West Breconshire', quoting "doi" (two), "hoil" (sun) and "cnoi" (to gnaw) as examples.¹⁵¹

It should also be noted, however, that as well as those forms given above, Huet also used the alternative forms of 'bywyd'¹⁵² (life) and 'cywir'¹⁵³ (correct), together with both 'haul'¹⁵⁴ and 'hayl'¹⁵⁵ (sun). Indeed, only in 'doi/doy' (two) is he consistent in representing this sound, but even here this does not necessarily extend to the compound forms as we also find 'deydec'¹⁵⁶ (twelve). Huet's use of these forms is evidence of the southern pronunciation of these words, but as such they are not wholly restricted to one dialect area. They could equally be found in both the dialect of Pembrokeshire and the Welsh of Breconshire.

Conclusions

The various words evidenced above, taken from Thomas Huet's translation of the Book of Revelation, may be categorised in order to give some indication as to the nature of Huet's own dialect: he used a series of distinctly southern words in his work, such as 'whedlea' (to talk), 'heol' (street), 'cwny' (to rise), 'can' (flour), 'ffrogaed' (frogs), 'eiste' (to sit), 'cwplay' (to finish) and 'yddy' (to his/her). Today, these are not particularly south-western in their orientation; indeed, many of them are more prominent in the south-eastern corner of the country. Occasionally, Huet used southern forms alongside northern ones, as is the case with 'cwympto' and 'syρθio' (to fall), 'ceseir' and 'cenllysc'/'cenllys' (hail) or 'dala' and 'dal' (to hold). This could indicate that his dialect was located in the transitional area between north and south where such features meet; a point strengthened by his constant use of northern forms over southern ones, such as 'allan' (out), 'y vyny' (up), and 'mellt' (lightning), rather than 'mâs', 'lan' and 'llyched'/'goleuni'.

The most suggestive evidence, however, appears to be items like 'twrwf' (thunder), 'cwppa' (cup), and 'pren' (tree) which, in the modern dialects, can be particularly associated with Breconshire and which probably represent words that were formerly used in the dialect of Radnorshire. It is possibly also significant that, when using words like 'mwrddwr' (murder) and 'abyl' (able), Huet kept to the more widely-used meanings of these forms as opposed to the rather distinct meanings that they seem to have had in north Pembrokeshire.

Whilst undoubtedly there have been changes in dialectal Welsh since the sixteenth century, equally it would seem reasonable to assume a degree of continuity. Clearly Huet's translation contains forms that are demonstrably southern, but there would appear to be little he used that could be regarded as distinctively south-western. Had his dialect been that of this area, then surely it

would be rational to expect his writing to display this in a more definitive way than would appear to be the case.

What information is available about Huet's life, work, and family strongly suggests he came from northern Breconshire, or perhaps western Radnorshire, and that he was not a native of Pembrokeshire, even though he was associated with St David's Cathedral through his position there as Precentor. It seems certain that he spent the greater part of his life in the ancient gwlad of 'Rhwng Gwy a Hafren', serving as a priest in a series of Radnorshire parishes, building a fine house in Breconshire, and finally being laid to rest in the local parish church.

Taken together with the linguistic information extracted from his translation, it seems sensible to conclude that Huet spoke the dialect of his home region and not that of the gwlad of 'Dyfed' (Demetia). This may be controversial, especially as the widely held view of many prominent Welsh scholars and academics is that he spoke the Dyfedeg (Demetian) dialect of Welsh.¹⁵⁷ It seems appropriate here to quote from a letter sent to *Y Gwyllyddydd*, the denominational newspaper of the Wesleyan Methodists in Wales, in the late 1820s by the Reverend Walter Davies, 'Gwallter Mechain', who made the following observations on Thomas Huet and the language he used in his translation:

Mynegwyd eisus mai gwr o Fualt, ym Mrycheiniog ydoedd, ac felly nid nepell o derfynau Gwent a Morganwg, lle y llefarwyd y Wenhwyseg. Herwydd hyn y disgwylir nodau o y gainc hono o Gymraeg yn y cyfieithiad.¹⁵⁸

Although the evidence from Huet's own work seems to support the idea that he did come from Breconshire/Radnorshire, and that he therefore spoke what may be a form of Gwenhwyseg (Gwentian), there remains one word in his translation of the Book of Revelation that seems to be at direct odds with this hypothesis. This is the form 'rroyssym', which is found only once in the text in the line "Ac mi a rroyssym amser yddy y etiferhay"¹⁵⁹ (and I gave her time to repent). This is the conjugated first-person singular form of the past tense of 'rhoi', 'to give', and today is found in Pembrokeshire, where it is recorded as 'rhoisim'.¹⁶⁰ It appears, therefore, that there is still more that Thomas Huet's work has to tell us about his dialect.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank Professor Geraint Jenkins, former director of the Centre for Advanced Welsh and Celtic Studies, for reading a copy of my original essay and making a number of constructive suggestions. To Mary Burdett-Jones, Dr Huw Walters, Dr Maredudd ap Huw, Siân Bowyer and Camwy MacDonald, thanks also for looking at my work, and encouraging me to make it more widely available through publication. In addition, I am grateful to Geraint Williams for checking my English translations of quotations from the Welsh originals and making some

sensible improvements, as well as to Bill Nicholls and Peter Hughes for allowing the publication of the photographs of the memorial plaque in St Afan's Church and the statue of Thomas Huet respectively. Thanks too are due to colleagues at the National Library of Wales for their help with the supply and licensing of images of material in its collections, and to the editor of *Brycheiniog*, Dr Mike Alun Williams, for putting his expert editorial skills to work and polishing my submission in the way he has. Finally, to my wife, Gill, for not only proofreading this paper, but also for her steadfast and continuing support in my ventures.

Notes

¹ The substance of this paper was initially presented as 'A Piece of Original Research on Dialect' for the Dialectology module of my Welsh Studies degree course at Lampeter University in 2001, to which has been added an Introduction, together with supplementary biographical information and explanatory comments in the Notes, for publication here.

² The principal review of the language used by Thomas Huet, and of his 'dialect', is to be found in Isaac Thomas' 1976 authoritative study, *Y Testament Newydd Cymraeg 1551–1620*: 287–301. For more recent assessments by my former course tutor, see Jones 2006: 97–9; Jones 2018: 230–8.

³ Jones 1994: 64 declares, "Above all Salesbury remains the outstanding example of the Welsh Renaissance scholar, broad in his range and interests ... inquisitive and enquiring". Stephens 1986: 543; 1998: 665 referred to him as "a seminal figure in the literary history of Wales" and the "most learned Renaissance scholar in the Wales of his day".

⁴ It would appear that Huet was only asked to help in the translation of the 1567 *Testament Newydd* fairly late in the day, if we consider a letter Richard Davies wrote to Matthew Parker, Archbishop of Canterbury, on 19 March 1565/66 in which he makes reference to the help he was receiving from Salesbury alone. Flower 1941: 7.

⁵ "T.H.C.M. who translated all the text of the apocalypse in the language of his country". T.H.C.M. standing for Thomas Huet Cantor *Menevensis*, according to Thomas 1902: 108, n. 2; or Cantor *Menevia* according to Thomas 1976: 212.

⁶ Evans 1953: 13 says, "Cyfieithydd y Llyfr Datguddiad oedd Thomas Huet, ... Deheuwr, fel y gwelir oddi wrth ei waith" (the translator of the Book of Revelation was Thomas Huet, ... a Southerner, as may be seen from his work).

⁷ Thomas 1967: 95.

⁸ Stephens 1986: 39; 1998: 48.

⁹ "Maybe [he was] a man of Dyfed". Gruffydd 1926: 48.

¹⁰ "It is likely that words such as *sirthiasont* (they fell), *ywchel* (high), besides the admixture of the u and the y, prove that he was a man of Dyfed". Gruffydd 1926: 49.

¹¹ Gruffydd 1926: 49 regards some of the words used by Huet as being part of a South Walian literary tradition, but others as being clearly not, and saw yet further forms as being old Mediaeval ones. Evans 1953: 17 also considers that "Y mae olion iaith y Deneubarth ar Gymraeg Thomas Huet" (there are traces of the language of the South in Thomas Huet's Welsh).

¹² Thomas, 1902: 112.

¹³ Thomas 1976: 299 feels that such phonetic spellings were reproducing a pronunciation that is, to a greater extent, "*yn arbennig i Gymry Dyfed*" (particular to the Welsh of Dyfed), and gave an extensive list of examples which he described as being "*yn ôl eu sain yn y Ddyfedeg*" (according to their sound in the Demetian dialect).

¹⁴ "It is not the dignity of archaic and Latinised Welsh that is to be seen in Huet's version but the clarity of a familiar spoken language. Unfortunately, but unavoidably, Huet gives the familiar spoken language for the Welsh of Dyfed only; and printed in phonetic orthography, it was much harder for the Welsh generally to read and understand than Salesbury's antiquated vocabulary and unphonetic orthography". Gruffydd 1988: 57.

¹⁵ Thomas 1976: 335 points out that when it came to the choice between Huet's dialect words and Salesbury's more common words in the margins, the latter were chosen every time by Morgan, unless he had his own word for them. He also tells us that Morgan changed those archaic words used by Huet, *ibid*: 336, as well as his phonetic dialect spellings, which Morgan altered almost entirely to agree with today's more usual literary forms, *ibid*: 350.

¹⁶ Williams 1997: 244 comments, "his Welsh savoured far too strongly of the south-western dialect of Dyfed ... to be intelligible to natives of other provinces in Wales".

¹⁷ "Indeed, it would not have been necessary to explain that Huet used "the language of his country" because almost every verse shows traces of the vocabulary and syntax of the South". Gruffydd 1926: 49.

¹⁸ Thorne 1984: 178 gives the following appraisal: "The gwlad was the most important administrative unit in early medieval Wales. It was a political region with definite boundaries ... subject to single rule and a single royal dynasty".

¹⁹ White 2007: 27 clearly associated Huet's translation with Pembrokeshire when she said it was "couched in the language of his local congregation in St David's, in the dialect of south-west Wales".

²⁰ The neo-Gothic memorial in the form of an Eleanor Cross, located in St Asaph Cathedral close, was unveiled on 29 April 1892.

²¹ "Nothing is known of his lineage or where he came from". Gruffydd 1988: 37 n. 3.

²² The material is held at the National Archives in Kew, ref. C 3/88/84, though photocopies were deposited at the National Library of Wales in 1997, ref. NLW Facs 819.

²³ Grazebrook and Rylands 1889: 337. (The "Cold Newton" here, which is actually in Leicestershire, being an apparent confusion with Newton Bromswold in Northamptonshire.)

²⁴ Lee 1891: 156.

²⁵ Thomas 1976: 149.

²⁶ Jenkins 1953: 349.

²⁷ Jenkins 1959: 370.

²⁸ I have a suspicion that this may not, in fact, be the same Thomas Huet who became Precentor of St David's.

²⁹ There are two entries in the relevant Bishop's Register for St David's, which confirm Huet was instituted to the Radnorshire Rectories of "kevenllyse" and "llanbadarne in melenithe" on 9 May 1556, ref. NLW St David's Diocesan Records, SD/BR/2 Bishop's Register, 1554-1566: 18. However, it would appear that Huet was earlier granted the Breconshire benefices of Llanafan Fawr and Llanynys, in 1544 and 1551 respectively, although he seems to have been deprived of both of these livings following the accession of Queen Mary, ref. NLW MS. 1626C: 209, 454.

³⁰ Huet was initially presented to the Precentorship of St David's Cathedral by Queen Elizabeth on 6 February 1560/61, under the Privy Seal, Collingridge and Wernham 1948: 4, although he wasn't ordered to "be installed as precentor" until 27 April 1561, and only finally "admitted canon resident" on 30 April 1561, Green 1914: 285, 287 n. 21.

³¹ Many biographical sources refer to the recommendation of Huet as Bishop of Bangor, see Lee 1891: 157; Williams 1894: 124; Jenkins 1953: 349; Jenkins 1959: 370; Matthew and Harrison 2004: 599, but only one, *Athenae Cantabriginses*, quotes from contemporary evidence. This was in the form of two letters, the first from Bishop Richard Davies to Sir William Cecil, dated 30 January 1565/66, and the other from Archbishop Matthew Parker, also to Cecil, dated 7 February 1565/66, both commending Huet for the bishopric, Cooper and Cooper 1861: 108.

³² The position of commissary, or *commissarius*, for the Archdeaconry of Brecon noted in the Bishop's Report of 1570, would have been an important one for Huet, and it seems to be something that he had previously held earlier in his career, before being deprived of such around the end of 1550 under Bishop Robert Ferrar, Brown 1997: 158.

³³ Thomas 1902: 38.

³⁴ Edward Yardley, in Green 1927: 132, tells us that Huet "had an estate at Llanavon Vawr in the county of Brecon, where [there was] a stately habitation called Ty Mawr, or ye Great House, in which he died", whereas Jones 1809: 241 says that the "mansion" of "Ty mawr in Llysdinam ... was built by Thomas Huet, precentor of Saint David's, rector of Cefnlllys, and of Disserth". Howse 1953:

71 states that Huet had “built the now demolished Ty Mawr at Llysdinam”, however, Jones and Smith 1963: 60, whilst acknowledging that “Little if any work of his [i.e. Huet’s] day is recognisable in the present house”, thought at least “one chimney-stack probably, and perhaps part of the walls” may date from the late sixteenth century, but that “All the rest ... is of late 18th or early 19th century”.

³⁵ Green 1927: 132.

³⁶ It is likely that the ‘dispensation’ was because of his parochial and commissarial responsibilities. In fact as early as 1563, as part of a survey of the Diocese of St David’s that year, Huet was described then as “contynually for the most parte residing and dwellinge” within the Archdeaconry of Brecon because of his position as one of two special commissaries there, Gray 1997: 30, 34.

³⁷ It is worth noting Huet’s role as a Justice of the Peace and how his name appears in the lists of magistrates for both the counties of Brecon and Radnor from October 1560, until July 1583 for the former, and October 1577 for the latter, Phillips 1975: 252-257, 314-317.

³⁸ Edward Yardley, in Green 1927: 132, refers to this as being “a great stone with five crosses on it, which was formerly ye altar stone”.

³⁹ Although the modern convention is to spell the surname as ‘Huet’, with only one ‘t’, examples of what appear to be his signature have it as ‘Huett’.

⁴⁰ “He was a native of Llanfihangel Brynpabuan”. Payne 1966: 128.

⁴¹ Rowlands 1869: 21 claims that up until the beginning of the nineteenth century there were “garfanau gwely ag arnynt yn gerfiedig ‘T. H.’” (bedposts upon which were carved ‘T. H.’) at Aberduhonw. A reference to Thomas Huet living in Bulth, when he faced accusations by Hugh Price at the Court of Chancery in 1570/71, seems to have been interpreted as his residing at Aberduhonw due to its proximity to the town, Williams 1993: 8.

⁴² In his *Heraldic Visitations* Lewys Dwnn noted that “James Vychan”, who was the son of “David ap Howel ap Ffylip Vychan Esq”, married “Marged v[erch] Tomas Huwett ... Kantor y Ddewi”, Meyrick 1846: 193. From other evidence it seems their daughter married Thomas Howel, Curate of Llangamarch, who was the father of James Howel, the Historiographer Royal to Charles II, Jones 1805-09, Volume II, Part I: 270.

⁴³ Jones 1805-09, Volume II, Part I: 241-2 remarks on Thomas Huet’s “brother Rees Huet” and the fact he believed his daughter, and heiress, married Richard Jones of Bryn Ioiau.

⁴⁴ Gruffydd 1926: 48 n. 4 refers to how “Y Cantor” (the Cantor) acted in effect as the president of the cathedral at St David’s, and how the role of Dean is actually something new there.

⁴⁵ According to the Register of the Council in the Marches of Wales, and a return for Pembrokeshire, dated 7 July 1575, it was only “perhaps once a year, or once in two years the Bishop of St David’s and Thomas Huet clk Chanter of St Davids and Sir Lewis Gwynne Cathedral Chanter to the Bishop come to the said S. Davids in the Hundred of Dewslan ... The Bishop dwells at Abergwilly (co. Carmarthen), Thomas Huet Chanter of St Davids in the county of Brecknock and Sir Lewis Gwyn at Abergwilly”, illustrating both the infrequency of time that Huet seems to have spent in Pembrokeshire and the fact that his home, at this time at least, was very much in Breconshire, Flenley, 1916: 140.

⁴⁶ Williams 1988: 38 gives him as being “a native of Llanafan Fawr”, Williams 1992-1993: 63 “a native of Llanafan in Breconshire”, and Williams 1997: 244 as merely hailing “from Breconshire”.

⁴⁷ “Betwixt Wye and Severn”.

⁴⁸ Hawkins 2015: 59 says of the demise of Welsh in Radnorshire, “The language collapsed in the first half of the nineteenth century, and by 1850 was no longer the normal means of communication in any parish in the County, with the possible exception of Cwmteuddwr and Saint Harmon”.

⁴⁹ In *Detholion o Destament Newydd 1567*, and therefore in this paper, these features are rendered in italics, since Roman type is used for the body of the text instead of the black lettering of the original.

⁵⁰ “Every word presumed to be unintelligible, whether in terms of the vernacular of the country, or the material’s unfamiliarity, has been noted and clarified on the margin of the relevant page”. Thomas 1967: 78.

⁵¹ In his introduction, Parry expressed the intention to reproduce the original text exactly as it was printed in 1567, including the spelling errors, Parry 1967: vii. In the event, small concessions were made.

⁵² Huet 1567: Pen. iij. 1.

⁵³ It is worth pointing out that whilst Huet spells some words with an initial 'wh-', he actually has a greater number of examples with 'chw-'. In the modern dialects 'chw-' is the only sound used in north Wales, whereas in the south this generally becomes 'hw-'. In the Dyfi Valley and north Ceredigion both 'chw-' and 'hw-' are to be heard, Thomas and Thomas 1989: 34, something mirrored in northern Breconshire, Jones 2000: 51. Huet's employment of 'wh-' alongside 'chw-' is, therefore, more suggestive of a transitional area.

⁵⁴ "The word 'siarad' (talk) would never be heard". Wiliam 1990: 54.

⁵⁵ Morris 1910: 156.

⁵⁶ Thomas and Thomas 1989: 89.

⁵⁷ Huet 1567: Pen. xxj. 21.

⁵⁸ *Ibid*: Pen. xj. 8.

⁵⁹ Thomas 1973: 310-1.

⁶⁰ Morris 1910: 165; Thomas 1973: 114-5.

⁶¹ Huet 1567: Pen. xij. 1.

⁶² Griffiths and Jones 1995: 1176.

⁶³ "In common use in the South". Thomas 1956: 644.

⁶⁴ Thomas and Thomas 1989: 150.

⁶⁵ Huet 1567: Pen. xvij. 13.

⁶⁶ Thomas 1973: 172-3.

⁶⁷ Jones 1984: 98.

⁶⁸ Thomas and Thomas, 1989: 128-9.

⁶⁹ Huet 1567: Pen. xvj. 13.

⁷⁰ Thomas 1973: 252; Griffiths and Jones 1995: 575.

⁷¹ Parry-Williams 1923: 93-4.

⁷² *Atlas Geirfaol Brycheiniog* clearly shows a general distinction between 'broga' in the north of Breconshire and 'ffroga' in the south, with a transitional area between, Jones and Jones 1996: 160-161, although Jones 1985: 70-1 noted that "<ffroga> occurs as far north as Llangammarch [i.e. in north Breconshire]".

⁷³ Huet 1567: Pen. xj. 7.

⁷⁴ Jones 1984: 98.

⁷⁵ Thomas 1973: 186-7.

⁷⁶ Huet 1567: Pen. iij. 4.

⁷⁷ *Ibid*: Pen. iij. 9.

⁷⁸ Morris 1910: 202, 206, 297.

⁷⁹ Thomas and Thomas 1989: 46.

⁸⁰ Huet 1567: Pen. ij. 17.

⁸¹ *Ibid*: Pen. j. 10.

⁸² *Ibid*: Pen. j. 1.

⁸³ Morgan 1952: 149.

⁸⁴ Evans 1964: 53, n.2,

⁸⁵ Thorne 1993: 162, n.1.

⁸⁶ Huet 1567: Pen. ix. 1.

⁸⁷ Thomas 1973: 468-9.

⁸⁸ Huet 1567: Pen ij. 5.

⁸⁹ *Ibid*: Pen. v. 8.

⁹⁰ *Ibid*: Pen. xj. 11.

⁹¹ Jones 1984: 100.

⁹² Huet 1567: Pen. viij. 7.

⁹³ Thomas 1973: 126.

⁹⁴ Huet 1567: Pen. xj. 19.

⁹⁵ *Ibid*: Pen. xvj. 21.

⁹⁶ *Ibid*: Pen. j. 16.

- ⁹⁷ Thomas 1973: 19, 67, 531; Thomas and Thomas 1989: 26-7.
- ⁹⁸ Middle Welsh had the forms ‘y maes o’, meaning both ‘outside’ and ‘out of’, as well as the alternative ‘o vaes y’. Evans 1964: 201.
- ⁹⁹ Huet 1567: Pen. v. 1.
- ¹⁰⁰ *Ibid*: Pen. iiij. 1, Pen. xvj. 12, Pen. xvij. 8, Pen. xviii. 5 and Pen. xx. 13.
- ¹⁰¹ Huet’s text has three examples where he includes ‘dd’ in ‘y vynydd’ meaning up or upwards, Huet 1567: Pen. vij. 7, Pen. xij. 5 and Pen. xx. 13.
- ¹⁰² Thomas, 1973: 67, 531.
- ¹⁰³ Huet 1567: Pen. xxj. 10.
- ¹⁰⁴ “That would stand on a high hill”. Morgan 1952: 395.
- ¹⁰⁵ Thomas 1973: 531; Thomas and Thomas 1989: 149.
- ¹⁰⁶ Huet 1567: Pen. ij. 14, Pen. ij. 15, Pen. iij. 3, Pen. iij. 11 and Pen. vij. 1.
- ¹⁰⁷ Thomas and Thomas 1989: 134.
- ¹⁰⁸ Morris 1910: 96-7.
- ¹⁰⁹ Huet 1567: Pen. iij. 3.
- ¹¹⁰ *Ibid*: Pen. iij. 11.
- ¹¹¹ Thomas and Thomas 1989: 72.
- ¹¹² Huet 1567: Pen. ij. 1.
- ¹¹³ This paragraph has been rewritten since my 2001 essay due to me wrongly interpreting some of the data I had gathered at that time, and mistakenly noting other examples as having the ‘a’ added when this was not, in fact, the case.
- ¹¹⁴ Huet 1567: Pen. iiij. 5.
- ¹¹⁵ *Ibid*: Pen. viij. 5.
- ¹¹⁶ Thomas 1973: 130-131.
- ¹¹⁷ Jones 1988: 103; Jones and Jones 1996: 24-5.
- ¹¹⁸ Thomas 1973: 130-11.
- ¹¹⁹ Huet 1567: Pen. x. 3.
- ¹²⁰ Jones and Jones 1996: 22-3.
- ¹²¹ Huet 1567: Pen. xvj. 19.
- ¹²² Thomas 1973: 156-7.
- ¹²³ Jones and Jones 1996: 196-7.
- ¹²⁴ Thomas 1973: 156-7.
- ¹²⁵ Huet 1567: Pen. ij. 7.
- ¹²⁶ *Ibid*: Pen. vij. 3, Pen. viij. 7.
- ¹²⁷ *Ibid*: Pen. vj. 13.
- ¹²⁸ *Ibid*: Pen. xj. 4.
- ¹²⁹ Thomas 1973: 412-3, 418-9.
- ¹³⁰ Jones and Jones 1996: 174-5.
- ¹³¹ Thomas 1973: 412-3, 418-9.
- ¹³² Huet 1567: Pen. ix. 24 [21].
- ¹³³ Parry-Williams 1923: 243.
- ¹³⁴ Griffiths and Jones 1995: 920.
- ¹³⁵ Morris 1910: 202; Charles 1971: 122.
- ¹³⁶ Huet 1567: Pen. v. 3.
- ¹³⁷ *Ibid*: Pen. xv. 8.
- ¹³⁸ Thomas 1916: 51.
- ¹³⁹ Morris 1910: 13; Charles 1971: 105.
- ¹⁴⁰ Huet 1567: Pen. iij. 5.
- ¹⁴¹ *Ibid*: Pen. iij. 7.
- ¹⁴² *Ibid*: Pen. j. 16.
- ¹⁴³ *Ibid*: Pen. j. 16.
- ¹⁴⁴ *Ibid*: Pen. xj. 2.
- ¹⁴⁵ *Ibid*: Pen. vij. 5.

- ¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.* Pen. xj. 3.
- ¹⁴⁷ Thomas and Thomas 1989: 44-5.
- ¹⁴⁸ Morris 1910: 80.
- ¹⁴⁹ "In dialects other than the Demetian". Thomas 1976: 299, n. 5.
- ¹⁵⁰ Thomas 1975/76: 353.
- ¹⁵¹ Powel 1904: 55. Hawkins 2013: 82 comments with regard to Radnorshire, and how "In the west [of that county] there is a tendency for 'au'/'eu' to be replaced by 'oi': dau [two] > doi; Cemteuddwr > Cwmtoiddwr; neuadd [hall] > noiadd (very common in the west)".
- ¹⁵² Huet 1567: Pen. ij. 7.
- ¹⁵³ *Ibid.* Pen. xv. 3.
- ¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.* Pen. vj. 12.
- ¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.* Pen. viij. 12.
- ¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.* Pen. xij. 1.
- ¹⁵⁷ Brynley F. Roberts, in Matthew and Harrison 2004: 599, whilst on the one hand recognising that Huet "was probably a native of Brecknockshire", on the other describes his translation as being "characterized by its natural, contemporary language", which reveals Huet's "own south-western Welsh dialect", despite the apparent contradiction here in someone seemingly from mid-Wales speaking a dialect of the south-west.
- ¹⁵⁸ "It has already been stated that he was a man of Buallt, in Brecknock, and therefore not far from the borders of Gwent and Glamorgan, where the Gwentian dialect was spoken. Because of this, traces of that branch of Welsh are to be expected in the translation". Davies 1828: 33-34.
- ¹⁵⁹ Huet 1567: Pen. ij. 23 [21].
- ¹⁶⁰ Morris 1910: 249. I now believe it might be better to see 'rroyssym' as simply an archaic alternative that, as well as surviving into the modern period in Pembrokeshire as 'rhoisim', may have existed as a fossilised form in other areas, perhaps even in Breconshire in the sixteenth century. In this regard, I must note Huet's use of similar forms, such as 'bym' (I was), Huet 1567: Pen. j. 18, and 'eythym' (I went), Huet 1567: Pen. x. 9, as well as 'gwelas' (he/she saw), Huet 1567: Pen. xj. 11, *ibid.*: Pen. xij. 13. Unfortunately, space prevents me from elaborating on the relevance of these here.

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ADELINA PATTI IN BRECONSHIRE

JOHN RATH

*Giuseppe Verdi, the greatest composer of Italian Opera in the nineteenth century, said of Adelina Patti, “She is an artist by nature, so perfect that perhaps there has never been her equal ... A marvellous voice, a very pure style of singing, a stupendous artist with a charm and naturalness which no one else has.”*¹

Introduction

Adele Maria Juana Patti was born on 19 February 1843 in Madrid, to Italian parents who were both successful operatic singers² (Fig. 1). She had seven older siblings who also became singers and musicians. At the age of four, her parents sailed with the family to New York, where they had been offered contracts in the increasingly popular Italian Opera. By the age of nine, Adelina had become an amazing child prodigy, singing ballads and arias in public. Her earnings, while on tour with other artists, saved the family’s, by then, precarious finances (Fig. 2). In 1852, her sister Amalia married Maurice Strakosch, who began to accompany Adelina, soon taking on the role of manager. He guided her career until her first marriage in 1868.

During early adolescence, Adelina’s voice began to show signs of strain. It took a year’s rest for the voice to fully recover and settle. By 1855, she was not only on tour again but also learning vocalisations from her half-brother Ettore. Signors Muzio and Manzochi, from the Academy of Music in New York, began to coach Adelina to prepare her for her stage debut in 1859. By the time she set sail for Britain in 1861, with her father, Salvatore, and Maurice Strakosch, she had over 10 major roles under her belt, having toured in concerts and opera performances as far afield as Canada and Cuba.

James Henry Mapleson, founder of the first musical agency in London and assistant to the impresario E. T. Smith, had invited Adelina to make her London debut at Her Majesty’s Theatre. On arriving at their hotel however, Adelina learned that her season had been cancelled. Unperturbed, Maurice Strakosch was able to arrange a meeting with Frederick Gye, director of Covent Garden, and to persuade him to put on a series of extra performances for this virtually unknown young singer. Adelina’s debut on 24 May 1861, as Amina, the sleep walking girl in Vincenzo Bellini’s *La Sonnambula*, became one of those nights that go down in the annals of the theatre (Fig. 3)! As Charles Dickens wrote, “Mlle. Adelina Patti, on her first evening’s appearance at our Italian Opera—nay her first song—possessed herself of her audience with a sudden victory which has scarcely a parallel”.³ The ‘Reign of Patti’ had begun.

Thereafter began annual tours of Britain and command performances at Buckingham Palace. She triumphed in Holland and Berlin before her second



Figure 1. Adelina Patti as Rosina in Rossini's Barber of Seville by Franz Winterhalter.
Courtesy of Lord Poltimore, grandson of Baron Cederström from his second marriage



Figure 2. Adelina, aged 10, points at an illustration of her idol Jenny Lind.



Figure 3. Adelina Patti as Amina in Bellini's *La Sonnambula* c.1861

Covent Garden season as undisputed star. Patti conquered Paris in 1862 and, season by season, she expanded her repertoire of roles with audiences clamouring to see and hear her throughout Europe. A highly spirited, passionate young woman, Patti had many admirers, but, in 1868, she married the Marquis de Caux, equerry to the French Court. Now the feted Prima Donna was also the 'Famous Marquise' (Fig. 4). However, during the 1875/6 season in St. Petersburg and Moscow, it became obvious to her husband that an affair had developed between Adelina and the French tenor Ernesto Nicolini. (With some irony, Patti had, at first, disliked Nicolini for his bragging about extra marital affairs). During



Figure 4. Adelina Patti of the dark eyes, the young superstar.

the balcony scene in Charles Gounod's opera *Romeo and Juliette* they began to exceed the number of kisses stipulated in the score! Patti became the 'Infamous Marquise' as news of the scandal spread. Audiences went to see, not the great artist, but the beautiful sensualist. In her favourite role, Violetta in Verdi's *La Traviata*, the famous courtesan sacrifices everything to be with her lover (Fig. 5). Patti was now this woman deeply in love. At the world's most famous opera house, La Scala Milan, her performance was described as "sublime and fascinating".⁴



Figure 5. Sketch by Ilya Yefimovich Repin of Adelina Patti as Violetta in Act 2 of Verdi's *La Traviata*, during a performance in St Petersburg c.1869.

Verdi's *Aida* was first performed at Covent Garden in June 1876. Patti supervised the designing of her costumes and looked ideal as the slave who is, in fact, an Ethiopian princess. Ernesto Nicolini was her lover Radames. It was a triumph for both of them with the *Athenaeum* critic placing Patti among the "greatest tragediennes", with her voice "towering above the fortissimo of her colleagues, band and chorus".⁵

Patti and Nicolini buy Craig-y-Nos Castle

In 1878, Patti and Nicolini travelled by train to stay at Waterton Hall, near Bridgend in south Wales. They visited the Swansea industrialist Sir Hussey Vivian at Cadoxton Hall, near Neath. Together with his brother Graham, he showed Patti the castle Craig-y-Nos (Rock of the Night), designed by T.H. Wyatt, and nestling between high cliffs in the upper Swansea Valley (Fig. 6). Here was the refuge that both she and Nicolini sought, away from the opprobrium of society. She bought it for £3,500—with 17 adjoining acres—but eventually spent £100,000 on its extension. Over the years, she also bought hundreds more acres of surrounding land, enabling a road to be constructed up to a station at Penwyllt on the Neath to Brecon Railway line, which had opened in 1863. She could never have settled at Craig-y-Nos without this rail connection to the north, especially Liverpool and its ships to America, and to the south, to London and the Continent. Her luxurious carriage was kept in Neath and brought up to Penwyllt whenever Madame needed it (Fig. 7). In 1907, Penwyllt station formally became Craig-y-Nos station. A large stone waiting room still exists, where her entourage would wait while her carriage was hitched onto the train before setting off.

The castle was extended to include a large conservatory, an English and French kitchen, greenhouses, a huge winter-garden to one side, and a bell tower and billiard room to the other. The music room housed the Orchestrion, which played orchestral music from music rolls. Patti's beautiful theatre, based



Figure 6. Craig -y-Nos Castle.



Figure 7. Adelina Patti's luxury Great Western Railway Special Carriage, No. 9044, now restored and in Bodmin.

Courtesy of Tudor Watkins

on Richard Wagner's Festival Theatre in Bayreuth, but on a smaller scale, was opened in 1891. William Barron, who had started his career at the Royal Botanic Gardens in Edinburgh, was commissioned to lay out the gardens, and also to transplant mature conifer trees. Patti believed that conifers had a beneficial effect on her voice. The landscaping included a boating lake and another where Nicolini could fish. The river Tawe flowed through the grounds, with pretty bridges and pathways where Patti exercised with her friends and visitors. This was their 'Court', set against a wild backcloth reminiscent of Walter Scott's *Bride of Lammermoor*, which became Gaetano Donizetti's *Lucia di Lammermoor*—the opera in which the 16 year-old Patti had stunned audiences at her debut at the Academy of Music Opera House in New York in 1859.

Patti was fascinated by the modern technology arising from the Industrial Revolution that surrounded the Swansea Valley. She used it in extending Craig-y-Nos, which was the first private residence in Wales to have an electric generator installed. There were servants' quarters, a laundry, a gas house, farmyard, stables, and a coach house. Initially, Patti employed 20 staff, not including the gardeners. The full complement of the Castle reached more than 70 at its height, with Patti being by far the greatest private employer in the upper Swansea Valley.

As well as ‘Karo’ Baumeister, who managed the household, and Patro, Patti’s personal maid, the next most important members of the household were her butler Longo, and the chef-de-cuisine Adami, whom she met in Dublin when he served her the most delicious chicken soup. Louisa Law had been Patti’s companion for years until the affair with Nicolini destroyed their friendship. Her secretary was Mabel Woodford and the head gardener, Con Hibbert, who worked for Patti at Craig-y-Nos for 30 years.⁶ He remembered the fun, with the champagne flowing like water; “Pop the Corks Longo!” was a favourite exclamation of Patti. Champagne was so good for the voice! The estate was managed by William Heck, who was responsible for keeping the lakes stocked with fish for Nicolini.

Finally, in 1886, after a messy divorce from De Caux (which cost Patti—as the guilty party—1,500,000 French francs), Adelina Patti and Ernesto Nicolini were married by the French consul in Swansea. As divorcees, they could not be married in a catholic church, but a ceremony at St Cynog’s church in Ystradgynlais became a huge celebration. In the parish register, against Patti’s name was ‘spinster’ and against Nicolini’s: ‘bachelor’!⁷ Hundreds of locals and 50 invited guests took part. To thank the locals for all the bunting and garlands, 3,000 children had refreshments provided for them with 300 of the poorest receiving new clothes.

In Wales, Adelina Patti began to sing charity concerts to aid the poor and the sick of the Swansea Valley. The first, in 1882, raised £830 for the Swansea General Hospital, followed by concerts raising between £700 and £800 for the Brecon Infirmary and the Rest Convalescent Home for the Poor at Porthcawl (Fig. 8). She also sang benefit concerts in Neath and Cardiff. She was now ‘Lady Bountiful’, spreading her ‘bounty’ far and wide. Maurice Strakosch had, for years, only let her sing without a fee in exceptional circumstances but now the accusation, that she was without generous feelings, was refuted. Her erstwhile manager died in Paris in 1887.

That year, Patti’s train back to Wales was diverted through Brunel’s Severn Tunnel. It had been plagued



Figure 8. Benefit Concert in Brecon, 13 August 1885.

by leakage, people being loath to travel through the first rail tunnel under water. At this unofficial opening, Patti's train was met on the Welsh side with champagne. The Tunnel shortened the journey from Paddington considerably and the Great Western Railway always cherished their renowned customer as did the other railway companies she used.

Returning to America in 1882, after 20 years, Patti undertook annual tours of North America until 1904—plus two tours of South America—in which she earned fees far in excess of what she earned in Europe. She was not only the most famous Prima Donna of her time but by far the richest the world had known (Fig. 9). At Covent Garden, she sang in 25 consecutive seasons, her fee per performance reaching £1,500, whilst a member of the chorus was paid £15 a week. Back in 1861, her first three 'debut' performances had been stipulated as 'unpaid' to gauge the reaction of the public and, more importantly, the press. Frederick Gye's gamble in employing Patti paid off handsomely, although he had been quite prepared to cancel her contract, had she not been a success!



Figure 9. Adelina Patti wearing some of her jewels in the 1890s.

Courtesy of William R. Moran

The National Eisteddfod in Brecon

The National Eisteddfod in Brecon in 1889 was remembered for many years as the 'Patti Eisteddfod'. On the second day, William Abraham, better known as 'Mabon', the miners' leader and MP for the Rhondda, was in charge of proceedings. After various competitions, by 1:00pm, the huge pavilion was filled with an estimated 12,000 people. On announcing the arrival of Madame Patti-Nicolini's train, the 1st South Wales Borderers were dispatched to give her a musical welcome. Amid cheers, she mounted the platform of the pavilion, received a bouquet, and listened to the competitors. Dr James Williams, coroner of Brecon wished: "Hir, hir einioes, yn hollol ddi-loes, i'r enwocaf eos, Patti Craig y Nos".⁸

Upon request she sang several Italian arias followed by The last Rose of Summer (from Flotow's *Martha*) and Home Sweet Home, her favourite encore. But the greatest impression, without a doubt, was her rendering, in Welsh, of

Hen Wlad fy Nhadau, the anthem which was eventually to become the National Anthem of Wales (Fig. 10). Led by Mabon, the entire audience provided a chorus and, at the close, she complimented him on his voice. “You’re not so bad yourself!”, he replied.



Figure 10. Brecon Eisteddfod with Adelina Patti, and Mabon on her left, in 1889.

The celebrations for the opening of Patti’s theatre lasted several days, with excerpts from the Diva’s favourite roles, conducted by Luigi Arditi with a 20-piece orchestra from Swansea in the sunken pit. The raked floor in the auditorium could also be raised to form a ballroom. There were no side balconies, just one balcony at the back (now removed) and, around the frieze, the names of many of Patti’s favourite composers, including Rossini, Verdi, Bellini, Mozart, Meyerbeer, and Wagner. Deputising for the indisposed Henry Irving, the young actor William Terriss delivered the inaugural address, followed by excerpts from Act 1 of *La Traviata* and the garden scene from Gounod’s *Faust* (Fig. 11).



Figure 11. Adelina Patti as Marguerite, Mario as Faust, and Faure as Mephistopheles in the garden scene from Charles Gounod’s *Faust*, in 1864.

Courtesy Stuart-Liff

After a Grand Ball, there were scenes from *Martha* and Patti sang *Il Bacio* (The Kiss), the song that Arditi wrote for her. Nicolini had joined her in the Balcony Scene from *Romeo and Juliette* and Sardou's *La Tosca*, made famous by Sarah Bernhardt and not yet Puccini's opera, was performed as a mime play, in which Patti showed her ability to portray every shade of human emotion.

Early in 1893, Adelina Patti returned to La Scala Milan as the 80-year-old Giuseppe Verdi was rehearsing his final opera *Falstaff*. In between rehearsals, he visited her and Nicolini in their hotel and she observed that he looked "much younger than Gladstone and as gay as a lad". He signed a photo to "the marvellous artiste" and everyone was much saddened at their leave-taking⁹ (Fig. 12).

Following a telegram 'commanding' her to sing for Queen Victoria at Windsor Castle in 1894, Patti sang an aria and a song by Richard Wagner. At her May concert at the Albert Hall, Patti's first foray into the world of Wagner had been met with rapturous critical acclaim. Victoria complimented her on her German, wept as she sang *Home Sweet Home*, and gave her a ruby ornament with VR in diamonds. Adelina, who had previously felt snubbed by Victoria as she had not sung for her for 20 years, used to mimic the Queen's false teeth slipping out on hearing salacious gossip about Prima Donnas!

After an absence of 10 years, Patti sang six performances at Covent Garden in June 1895. In *Flora's* party scene from *La Traviata* she wore a bodice covered with 3,000 diamonds, dismantled from her jewellery, and worth a fortune. They were reset after the performance. There were 'silent gentlemen' from Bow Street in the chorus and back-stage! It was noted that, although her high tones were now often untameable, there was still only one Patti with her magnificent style. Zerlina in Mozart's *Don Giovanni* was a revelation to young opera goers who may never have heard her, as was her *Rosina* in Rossini's *The*



Figure 12. Adelina Patti as Giovanna D'Arco (Joan of Arc) in the armour which is now in Brecknock Museum & Art Gallery. She blesses a bust of the composer Verdi.

Barber of Seville. She loved comedy and in the ‘lesson scene’ from that opera she always interpolated other songs or arias; this time, the aria *Bel Raggio* from Rossini’s *Semiramide* with new ornaments. The final cadenza brought the house down! The front flat of the stage in Patti’s theatre depicts her as *Semiramide*, the Queen of Babylon, flying away in her chariot (Fig. 13). It was painted by Hawes Craven.

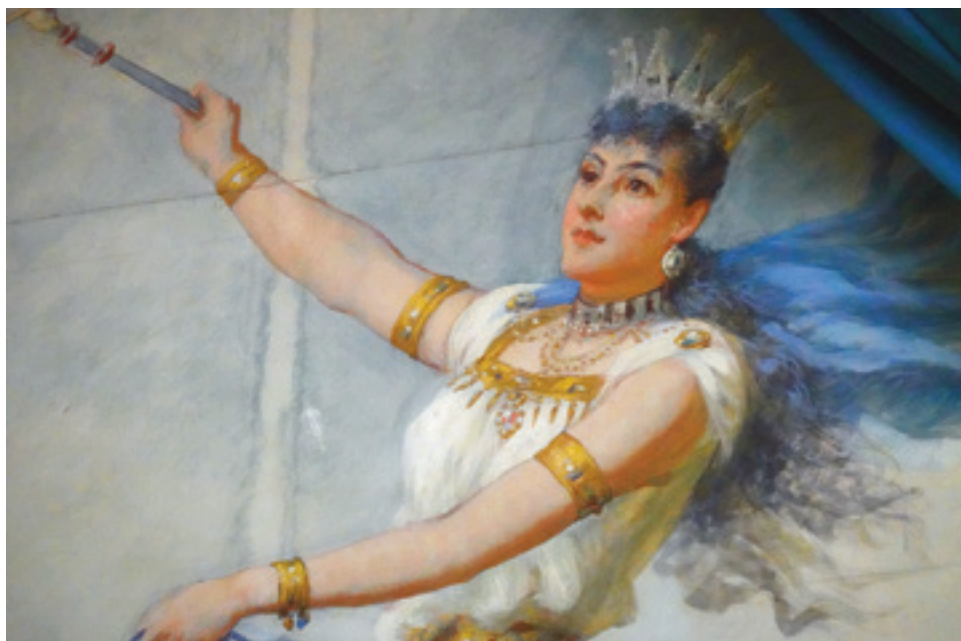


Figure 13. Adelina Patti as *Semiramide* on the front flat of the stage in her theatre at *Craig-y-Nos*, painted by Hawes Craven (Mike Williams)

One of the compliments Adelina Patti treasured most was from her childhood idol Jenny Lind, the Swedish Nightingale (then at the height of her fame in the 1850s). Lind later heard Patti in the 1880s and told the composer Arthur Sullivan, “There is only one Niagara and there is only one Patti!”¹⁰ Many wondered about the secret of her voice and how it was so beautifully preserved. She maintained that there was no cantabile without the middle of the voice being properly developed, avoiding strain by forcing high and low tones. After the age of 40, she added that she had taken a comparatively strict way of living with no red meat, only white wine and soda, with a glass of champagne as a pick-me-up. She never went to bed before 12.30am, always sleeping with the window wide-open in summer and partly open in winter, so as not to get cold air straight on her face.

Patti is awarded the Freedom of the Ancient Borough of Brecon

In 1896, Patti refused to sing a charity concert in Swansea as the ticket prices had been changed without her permission. She sang in Cardiff for the Cardiff Infirmary instead but sent part of the money to the Swansea Hospital Committee so that the hospital and the poor would not lose out.

That same year, Adelina Patti received the following letter from James Williams, Chairman of the Committee, written on 24 August and published in the Brecon and County Times and Brecknock Beacon on Friday 11 September.

To Madame Patti-Nicolini

Dear Madame,

I hinted to you in my note last week, that we hoped the Fates had it in contemplation to guide you amongst us again, and I am happy to say that our Town Council have, with complete unanimity agreed to confer upon you the 'Freedom of the Ancient Borough of Brecon', hoping that it might be acceptable to you as the highest honour in the power of a Municipal body to give—the script of Freedom will be enclosed in a casket specially designed, emblematic of our Nationality and your Fame.

The Baroness Burdett Coutts received the like compliment from the Corporation of London in recognition of her generous presentation of a Fish Market to the City, and we are impelled for many reasons to acknowledge our indebtedness to you—the help you gave to our Infirmary—your establishment of the Patti Fund, the interest from which yields most welcome aid every Christmas to the Soup Kitchens for the poor. It is fitting that Brecon as the only Corporate Town in the County, should take the initiative in showing respect and admiration to a lady who has travelled throughout the world, and chosen her home amidst the beautiful valleys and wild mountains of Breconshire, thereby making Craig-y-Nos Castle interesting in our future history as the residence of the greatest Prima Donna during the reign of our greatest British Queen.

Our last Freeman was the Right Honourable Lord Tredegar, and to give the ceremony the éclat due, it was presented at an Eisteddfod three years ago in the presence of many thousands, for nothing can draw Welshmen together like an Eisteddfod, and we propose having one on the Queen's birthday, the 24th May next, subject to your convenience and acceptance of the compliment. You will not be expected to take any part whatever, only as a recipient, unless you wish to charm the audience with a speech in Welsh? Arrangements will be made to enable you and your friends to hear one hundred colliers competing for the male voice choir prize, thereby showing you, the 'Queen of Song', having come to the 'Land of Song', where your 'Home Sweet Home' has thrilled the hearts of thousands, and from your fixing your fairy home beneath the shades of Penwyl Mountain, the fabled home of fairies, now unfortunately changed to Penwyllt. A deputation of three members and the Borough Surveyor have been appointed to wait upon you, and to give any information you may require.

Our New Market Hall will be ready by the end of the year, and it is intended that the pieces for competition at the Royal National Eisteddfod at Newport, will be

chosen for competition here, so as to enable the competing choirs to have a ‘preliminary canter’ on our platform.

It may be interesting to you to know who are all our Freemen:- H.R.H the Duke of Clarence; Sir David Evans, Lord Mayor of London; Col. Morgan VD, JP ,DL; the Right Honourable Marquess Camden; and the Right Honourable Lord Tredegar.

Hoping to see you enrolled and thereby adding lustre to our choice—I remain, Madame, yours sincerely, James Williams, Chairman of the Committee.

Accordingly, Adelina Patti was made ‘Honorary Burgess of the Ancient Borough of Brecon’ on 24 May 1897. Arriving in her private railway carriage, she joined the mayor and mayoress in the procession to the new Market Hall, passing through cheering crowds. At the specially erected arch—representing one of the town gates with the words “Croesau y Frenises y Gan” (Welcome to the Queen of Song) inscribed on it—the deputy-mayor proclaimed, “Admit Mme Patti-Nicolini into the confines of the Borough of Brecon” (Fig. 14). As well as the honorary title, she received a casket, carved from an ancient oak beam from Brecon Priory Church, containing the scroll of freedom (Fig. 15). Patti treasured the casket as one of her proudest gifts, “I love Wales and I love the Welsh people and this is the tangible reminder that this love I have borne them for so many years is returned”.¹¹ On another occasion she said, “Wales is one of the most beautiful spots in the world with splendid scenery so full of



Figure 14. Bulwark Gate *c.*1890s.

Courtesy Robert Eckley

grandeur. All the time I don't spend at Craig-y-Nos seems to me time lost".¹² The casket with the scroll has since disappeared, all attempts at tracing it having proved fruitless. Two months later, Patti opened Swansea's new Grand Theatre. One of the builders gave her a key as a small token that she would always be welcome into the building. To great hilarity he added that the key was a perfect replica of one from Newgate Debtors Prison!

By 1897, Ernesto Nicolini's health was deteriorating, which prevented him accompanying his wife to both Brecon and Swansea. Suffering from kidney and liver disorders, his doctors recommended he stay at Langland Bay near Swansea, hoping he would benefit from the sea air. Patti visited every day for seven weeks, always returning to Craig-y-Nos in the evening. After a period in Brighton, doctors in Paris advised Nicolini to follow a strict regime and recuperation in the south of France. However, he died in Pau on 18 January 1898; Patti having managed to get to Pau just before his death. He is buried in the cemetery there.

The summer before, his sons, Richard and Robert, had visited Craig-y-Nos. In his will, dated 29 June 1897, Nicolini left his entire estate to them, valued at more than \$200,000. The will contained no reference to Patti or to his three daughters, whereas in former wills of 1886 and 1889, Nicolini had bequeathed to Patti everything "which the law allows". This latest will was eventually overturned by the French Code Napoleon and his assets were divided between his five children and Patti. Did Nicolini change his will because, as was reported, Patti had already met a certain young man in Cannes? William Armstrong speculated on the state of their marriage when discussing a biography with her in that summer of 1897, "Come back next summer and we will write it. Then *this* will be over one way or another." "She said this quite serenely", he wrote in his chapter on Adelina Patti in *The Romantic World of Music*.¹³

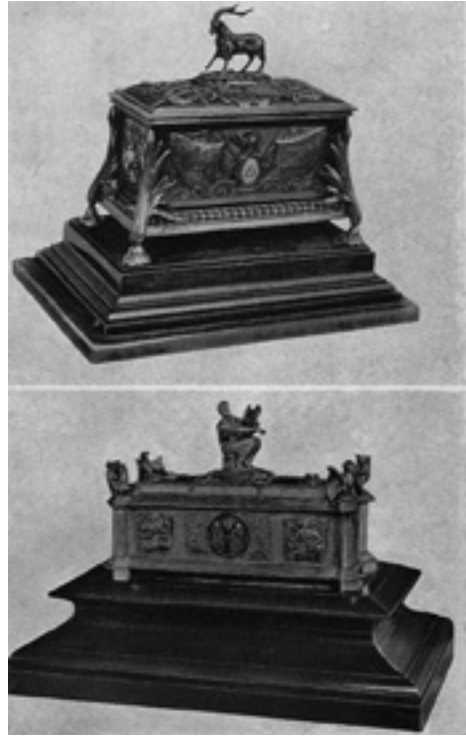


Figure 15. The caskets containing the Freedom of Brecon (top) and Freedom of Swansea (bottom). Hermann Klein

Marriage to Baron Olof Rudolf Cederström

A period of mourning followed, during which Patti had a magnificent rose garden laid out. In May, she appeared at the Albert Hall in widow's 'weeds' but two months later, again at the Albert Hall, the 'weeds' had been discarded. In November, during an intermission, Patti introduced her friends to a tall handsome young Swede, Baron Olof Rudolf Cederström (known as Rolf). He had run the London Health Gymnastic Institute where Patti had possibly gone to alleviate physical ailments. He had stayed at Craig-y-Nos the summer before; now, Rolf Cederström was introduced as Adelina Patti's fiancée.

She wrote to her nephew Alfred Barili, "The wedding will take place in Brecon after which we are going to Florence. I am very very happy"¹⁴ (Fig. 16). It was scheduled for February but actually took place on 25 January 1899 at St.

Michael's Roman Catholic Church in Brecon; the local children having been given a half-day holiday so they could witness the procession (Fig. 17).

Notice for Misses Richards
NEATH & BRECON RAILWAY.
 1899.
 NEATH, January 25th, 1899.

Madam Patti Nicolini's Wedding,
 AT BRECON, 25th INSTANT.

On the above SPECIAL FANESSE TRAINS for the convenience of Madam PATTI NICOLINI and Party will be run as follows:-

UP.	Empty Train.		Passenger.		DOWN.	Passenger.	
	Arr.	Dep.	Arr.	Dep.		Arr.	Dep.
Neath Low Level	8.30			8.35	Brecon Pass Station		11.00
Signal post		8.30			- Mount Street		11.04
Ollver Loop		8.40			Aberdeen		11.44
Ogysant		8.54			Derynack		12.2
Collyse		9.10			Bethel	(6)	12.31
Collyse	9.15	9.19			Trekyth		12.55
Percyth	9.25		9.30		Collyse		13.10
Bethel			9.40		Ogysant		13.44
Derynack			9.50		Ogysant	(9)	13.51
Aberdeen			10.10		Ollver Loop		13.7
Brecon Mount Street			10.19		Neath Signal Box		13.7
- Pass. Station			10.20		- Low Level		13.8

(6) Cross 11.0 a.m. Passenger at Brecon. (9) Cross 12.25 p.m. Goods at Neath. The 1.0 p.m. Goods on Neath to be got back at Neath next arrival of Special.
 The Up Train to be formed at Neath as follows:- 1 Third, 1 Second, 1 Single Van. The Extra Train, Down to Neath, to consist of the same Coaches provided in the reverse.
 At Percyth the Party will change from the Extra into a Coasting Train of 8 Wagon and 1 Van being their coach, and proceed to Neath.
 The Coasting train only will be used straight to London, by G.W.R. Special appointed to leave Neath at 1.10 p.m.
 Good Wagon Company's Stock will be used.
 Party (etc) must be made by the Extra Agents to bring the full class of all ordinary Coaches to Neath. Good Special Train may be got to their loaded cars.
 E. C. Williams



Figure 16. Neath and Brecon Railway notice for Adelina Patti's third wedding.

Courtesy Tudor Watkins

Figure 17. Adelina Patti descending from the train, with Baron Cederström behind her, for her marriage in Brecon. The only surviving picture of Patti at her wedding.

Patti entered the church on the arm of Sir George Faudel-Philips, the Lord Mayor of London, and Father John Griffiths plunged straight into the interrogatory sentences. No mass was celebrated because theirs was a 'mixed marriage': Patti being Catholic and the Baron Cederström protestant. The

Brecon County Times produced 3,000 copies of 'Our Patti Wedding Souvenir' and printed several on white satin for the bride and bridegroom. The souvenir described in detail what Patti wore, the decorations of the church, and provided full descriptions of the day's proceedings. After the short ceremony, Patti donated a crucifix and a pair of candlesticks to the church. Then, the procession wound its way to the railway station and a waiting train. Upon arrival at Penwyllt, the wedding party transferred to a saloon car sent by the Prince of Wales. The wedding feast was served in a dining saloon provided by the Great Western Railway, with a kitchen car added. These saloons were perfumed with the favourite fragrances of the Diva as the train sped to London with her usual mountain of luggage. Shortly before the marriage, Baron Cederström had become a naturalised Englishman, following Patti who had also become a British subject in 1898. She was nearly 56 years-old, her new husband 28 (Fig. 18)! A tragic incident occurred as the train carrying the bridal party reached Penwyllt. John Potter, who worked on the estate, was in charge of the Krupps canon which was to boom out a welcome to the bride and groom. It misfired and John Potter was killed. He is buried in Callwen.¹⁵



Figure 18. 'The Elixir of Love'. Adelina Patti at the time of third marriage.

Courtesy Stuart-Liff

Patti resumed her concert work after her marriage but with only one public opera performance, which was to be her last. Thirty-nine years after her debut at Covent Garden, she sang a scene from Gounod's *Romeo and Juliette* and the crowd was "astonished to hear the ever-fresh tones of her incomparable voice". As she said herself, "I am never so happy as when I am on stage. It is then that I feel the truest and strongest inspiration. It is then that I give of my best".¹⁶ There were benefit concerts in Rome and Stockholm, where the Swedish Order of *Literis et Artibus* was conferred on her, also further charity concerts in Paris and Brecon. The trips to Sweden allowed Patti to meet Cederström's family, his mother having been originally opposed to her son marrying a 'theatrical'!

At Craig-y-Nos, life was calm and restful, with a reduced staff as Patti began to enjoy her semi-retirement. There were picnics at Pantysgallog Bridge, with

its striking single span, and famous for the salmon leap (Fig: 19). Once, when Rolf Cederström became bored with the lack of fish, he chucked his gillie into the river and fished him out with his gaff. Then they enjoyed a bottle of whisky together!¹⁷



Figure 19. 'Madame Patti Watching Nicolini Landing a Salmon, Pont Pantysgallog'. John Ernest Breun (1862–1921). Brecknock Museum & Art Gallery

Each summer, Patti and her new husband travelled to Europe to take the waters at spas such as Mont Dore and Baden-Baden, also visiting the Wagner

Festival at Bayreuth. Patti was thrilled to hear Wagner's *Der Ring des Nibelungen* and *Parsifal*. Wagner's widow, the Grande Dame Cosima, invited the renowned guests to tea. They also enjoyed trips to Switzerland and the Riviera, returning for Christmas at Craig-y-Nos. Christmas was the time for Patti's annual distribution of money to the poor and elderly people of the district, tea for the local children, and presents from the Christmas tree in the theatre for all the staff. Around this time Patti decided to put the Castle on the market, maybe under the influence of her husband, but it did not sell, and the option was withdrawn.

In 1903, the manager, Robert Grau, managed to persuade Patti to return to America. At first, she resisted, but her young husband had never been to America and Grau offered \$5,000 per performance, plus 25 percent of gross receipts over \$7,500 at each concert. Transport costs were to be paid, plus a luxury 72 foot pullman railway carriage named Craig-y-Nos. American publicity went into full swing, detailing her early struggles, her triumphs, her three marriages, the fabulous jewels, her supposedly 'not-quite-platonic' friendship with the Prince of Wales (by now Edward VII), and, of course, the enormous fees she still commanded at the age of 60. Patti endorsed commercial items such as Pears Soap, corsets from Chicago, her Haines piano, and Adelina Patti cigars (Fig. 20)! She was dubbed in one of the newspapers as "Madame Adelina Patti Caux Nicolini Cederström!" Patti announced to reporters that this was her final farewell to her American public.

In the autumn of 1904, one of her many tours of Britain was planned, with Patti travelling in her private saloon railway car whilst the Baron drove in a new and luxurious automobile. After an absence of 27 years, Adelina Patti could not resist an invitation to return to St Petersburg to take part in a concert on 14 December for Russian soldiers wounded in the war with Japan. Her debut in 1869 had never been forgotten. There were magnificent receptions and Patti was awarded the Russian Croix Rouge Order. In 1905, she was also



Figure 20. Adelina Patti endorsing Balls corsets from the Chicago Corset Company

awarded the Legion d'Honneur, the greatest Honour France can give, after singing at the Paris Gaieté for the Caisse des Secours charity. President Loubet confirmed the honour "with as much pleasure as I experienced long ago when I had no grey hairs and heard Adelina Patti as Lucia and in *La Sonnambula*".¹⁸

Recording Patti's voice at Craig-y-Nos

Now came her greatest challenge. Sydney Dixon, the Gramophone Company's English agent, finally persuaded her to record her voice. Enrico Caruso had made his first recording in 1902 and it made him a household name. But he was 29, and Patti was over 60. In December 1905, Fred and Will Gaisberg brought their recording machine with its horn to Craig-y-Nos. Two bedrooms were placed at their disposal for the recording, with a curtain over one door through which the horn poked. The piano was placed on wooden boxes. Will was to supervise the recording onto the wax disks, which were then sent to London to be pressed, whilst Fred had to cope with Patti! With her Italian temperament, she was used to acting and singing her roles whilst moving freely in an uninhibited manner. The constraints of standing still and singing into the horn was not only contrary to her nature, but not the norm in the theatre right up to the twentieth century. She did, however, ask to hear the first recording, which ruined the wax disk, but was thrilled to hear her voice for the first time. "Ah! Mon Dieu! Maintenant je comprends pourquoi je suis Patti!"¹⁹ (Now I know why I am Patti!)

In the first session (1905), Landon Ronald accompanied her, and, after initial nervousness, she recorded some 20 of her favourite songs and arias, and a New Year greeting to her husband. In *Home Sweet Home*, the long, held tones on the words "Home, Home" are moving in their simplicity (Fig. 21). The mark of a great artist. In 1906, Alfred Barili played for the second session with Patti as Amina from Bellini's *La Sonnambula*. In 'Ah non Credea', a supreme example of the *Bel Canto* cantilena style, Patti's singing far exceeds later recordings, although her niece, Louise Barili, wrote in a letter that the recordings were but a "faint shadow" of her aunt's singing.

Until 1914, Adelina Patti and Rolf Cederström's life followed a fixed routine. After Christmas, there were trips to the Riviera, then back to Wales for the



Figure 21. The original recording of 'Home Sweet Home' in December 1905.

spring, followed by summer visits to European Festivals and spas. They were away for roughly six months of the year. The ‘inside staff’ at Craig-y-Nos now numbered 18, with 4 gardeners. Patro, who had been with Patti for so many years, died in 1907 and was buried in Glyntawe. Patti and the Baron were also present at Luisa Tetrazzini’s sensational debut at Covent Garden in 1907. For her part, Tetrazzini wrote in her autobiography that meeting Patti was the greatest day of her life. In spring 1909, Patti organised a benefit concert in London to honour her accompanist Wilhelm Ganz. At the end, Tetrazzini, who was in the audience, mounted the stage to embrace her; the Diva looking like a field marshal with her many medals and decorations on her bosom (Fig. 22)! There was a memorable benefit concert in Pontardawe, with a Welsh harp glittering in the sunshine on top of an arch of welcome in imitation of a Roman gateway. With the death of Edward VII in 1910, the Castle went into mourning. Adelina and Edward had known each other since 1860, when she had sung for him in Montreal. The Prince, later King, had been present at many a ‘Patti Night’.²⁰



Figure 22. Adelina Patti with her medals “like a Field Marshall”.

From the collection of the late
Carin Cederström Ekelhöf

Swansea’s tribute to Adelina Patti two years later, honoured her with the freedom of the Borough. It was a glorious affair and created great interest. She was the only woman in Britain to be honoured with the Freedom of two Boroughs: Brecon and Swansea. The casket that was presented to her in Swansea, has also disappeared.

In 1914, Patti and Cederström were at the spa in Karlsbad when the First World War broke out, consequently getting home with great difficulty. That autumn, Patti sang in a public benefit concert for the Red Cross War Fund at the Albert Hall. It was to be her final appearance in public. Henry Wood, founder of the Promenade concerts, rehearsed with her and was totally entranced, not only by her voice but by the Diva’s very presence. London audiences had not heard her for several years; they craned forward so as not to miss a note as Adelina Patti sang Cherubino’s aria from Mozart’s *The Marriage*

of Figaro. As virtually all able-bodied men went to the Front, life changed at the Castle with Cederström helping with the planting of vegetables for the locality. Patti's letters to the families in Sweden and America became increasingly full of despair: "It really is the most wicked and terrible war the world has ever seen".²¹

Patti's death and legacy

Only occasionally did Patti and her husband leave Craig-y-Nos for short stays in Brighton or London. On 17 March 1917, she made her will, leaving most of her estate to Rolf Cederström. There were legacies to, amongst others, Giacomo Longo, Alfred Barili, Roberto Strakosch—her sister Amalia's son—Karoline Baumeister, and her maid Odile Peslier (the latter stipulating "if in my service at the time of my death"). There were one year's wages to each of her domestics who had been with her for two years or more. Items of jewellery were left to Mabel Woodford, Karo, and various friends. The Stole worn by Pope Leo XIII—and given to Patti by the Reverend Bernard Vaughan—was left to Vaughan's nephew. Her estate was valued at (net) £90,837.

Prior to her marriage to the Marquis de Caux, Patti's father and Maurice Strakosch had moved her assets from Paris to London, putting them in her name solely. They did not trust de Caux's motives for marrying Patti. Alfred de Rothschild had looked after her financial affairs and he inherited valuable jewellery. Patti recorded a beautiful song he wrote for her, 'Si vous n'avez rien a me dire' (If you have nothing to tell me). Patti's health now began to give cause for concern as her physical and mental condition began to deteriorate. Her past seemed "like a dream now that we live so quietly and monotonously". But William Armstrong noted that memories of her romantic life were all around Craig-y-Nos, with a myriad of treasures in every room.

Finally, the 'terrible War' ground to a close, the survivors taking home with them the flu that was to kill more people than the war itself. Her sister, Amalia, died in Paris in 1918. Now 76, Patti gradually became weaker and, on the morning of 27 September 1919, she lost consciousness. She lingered on for several hours and died peacefully with her husband beside her. After her body was embalmed, the coffin was taken to the Roman Catholic Chapel of St. Mary at Kensal Green cemetery, where it lay for several months in the crypt (Fig. 23). The flu epidemic caused a delay in transporting it to Père Lachaise cemetery in Paris. Patti had wished to be buried next to Rossini, but the great composer's body had by then been removed to Florence. On the great stone slab is engraved: "Adelina PATTI Baronine Cederström 1843–1919" (Fig. 24).

All the contents of the Castle that Baron Cederström did not want were sold by auction. Patti's Winter-garden was dismantled and removed to Swansea Bay, where it remains as the Patti Pavilion. The Castle became the Adelina



Figure 23. Adelina Patti's coffin being lifted onto the train with Baron Cederström on the left.

Courtesy Tudor Watkins

Patti Hospital for children with tuberculosis from 1921 until the 1950s when it became a geriatric hospital until 1986. It is currently privately owned.

Adelina Patti was an extraordinary artist and celebrity. She was the greatest Diva of the second half of the nineteenth century with one of the most perfect voices of all time. Madame Patti was loved and revered by all who knew her, especially in Breconshire and south Wales, where she made her home for 40 years of her life.



Figure 24. Adelina Patti's tomb at Père Lachaise in Paris.

A big thank you to everyone who contributed information about Patti during the Adelina Patti Centenary Celebrations in September 2019 and to everyone who supported the events.

Notes

- ¹ Cone 1993: 129
- ² The spelling of Adelina's full name, and also that of her last husband Rolf Cederström, is taken from her Will, signed on 17 March 1917.
- ³ Cone 1993: 48.
- ⁴ Cone 1993: 129.
- ⁵ *The Athenaeum*, July 1, 1876.
- ⁶ Hibbert 2011.
- ⁷ Marriage Records in St Cynog's Church, Ystradgynlais.
- ⁸ May Patti of Craig-y- Nos, the most famous of nightingales, have a long untroubled life. Davies 1977: 148.
- ⁹ Cone 1993: 201.
- ¹⁰ Klein 1920: 381.
- ¹¹ Cone 1993: 218.
- ¹² Briwnant Jones, Dunstone, and Watkins 1988: 13.
- ¹³ Armstrong 1922: 12.
- ¹⁴ Cone 1993: 222.
- ¹⁵ Information provided by Mrs Mavis Perkins (née Potter)
- ¹⁶ Klein 1920: 276.
- ¹⁷ Davies 1992: 27.
- ¹⁸ Klein 1920: 362.
- ¹⁹ Cone 1993: 243.
- ²⁰ See for example, Wilde 1891.
- ²¹ Cone 1993: 261.

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John Rath was born in Manchester of Swiss and Irish parentage. After studying Drama and German at Manchester University, John began to study singing as a Bass-Baritone. He completed his studies in Switzerland and Italy and began his career at the Glyndebourne Festival. This led to engagements in France, and, in Paris, he sang Escamillo in Peter Brook's 'La Tragedie de Carmen' where it was filmed. After an extensive European tour, the production was seen in New York. John has sung at Covent Garden, for Scottish Opera and with Opera North in Leeds. Most recently his career took him to Germany where he has been able to sing most of the major operatic bass-baritone roles. John's repertoire includes many oratorios, Lieder and his fair share of modern works. Together with his partner he helped run a hill farm in Radnorshire for 30 years - when he was home in between engagements! They now live in Brecon and are keen to take part in the cultural life of this vibrant town.

ARCHIVES AND INTERVIEWS:
PERSPECTIVES ON POPULATION CHANGE
IN THE BLACK MOUNTAINS 1840–1983

ROBERT GANT

Introduction

In February 2015, *The Guardian* carried an obituary for the Cambridge University woodland ecologist, Oliver Rackham. It paid tribute to his discerning studies of forest cover across the United Kingdom and his credo that: “landscape is more than scenery; it is human history”.¹ This thinking is highly relevant to the management of upland regions in the UK where, in recent years, conservation policy has shifted from the protection of habitats to an understanding of the dependence of landscape on the underlying socio-economic and ecological systems.² The author’s investigation into population change in the eastern valleys of the Black Mountains during 1840–1983 has explored these issues.³ Its roots stretch back to 1960, when he first volunteered as a field surveyor for the Second Land Use Survey.⁴ The territory assigned for field-level mapping covered the Black Mountain valleys and intervening tracts of moorland vegetation. In parallel, vacation work on local farms had provided further connections to the agricultural community and its common heritage. These interests were later sustained in the production of an undergraduate dissertation on the transformation of landed estates in the middle-Usk valley. Then, later in life, an academic career at Kingston University, and marriage into a Black Mountains farming family, provided privileged insights into the wider dynamics of rural change.⁵ Findings were first reported at international conferences to meet the requirements of national funding agencies and a parent academic institution. More recently, public lectures in Powys have focused on the research methods and principal results.⁶ Positive feedback from these presentations has encouraged the author to share the headline conclusions (which have lain dormant for the past 30 years) with local rural communities, in the belief that they have an intrinsic social interest that can be re-purposed through engagement with community appraisal.⁷

The area studied covers 10 parishes centred on the Grwyne Fawr, Grwyne Fechan, and Honddu valleys, where the intervening ridges lie above the 240-metre contour. McCaw and Howell affirm that both the environmental setting and demographic history of this subregion are typical of the Black Mountains.⁸ The Registrar General’s census, however, has acknowledged limitations for micro-level studies of demographic change: it is selective in its content and coverage of life domains; and the census output areas, for which summary statistics are tabulated, vary greatly in size. This study responds to that challenge by using the demographic technique of house repopulation to

blend evidence from cartographic sources, archive materials, and oral testimony, and re-constructs individual occupation histories for a total of 435 dwellings.⁹ It proceeds to analyse spatial trends in the distribution of 174 abandoned dwellings and the 53 properties taken as vacation homes, against a background of wider economic factors, institutional changes, and planning interventions. Table 1 summarises the scene. It shows that in the period 1841–1983 the total population declined by 59 percent (1277 to 529) and the number of permanently inhabited dwellings by 31 percent (282 to 194).¹⁰ This reduction in population would have been greater but for the construction in the 1960s of several local authority houses in Lower Cwmyoy and a mixed-tenure development of 30 houses and bungalows at Llanbedr.

Table 1. Changes in population and housing totals 1841–1983.

Parish	Population				Housing stock			
	1841	1901	1931	1983	1841	1901	1931	1983
<i>Powys</i>								
Glynfach and part of Glasbury	59	45	40	22	22	16	16	7
Grwyne Fawr and part of Llanellieu	40	21	15	15	8	6	5	5
Grwyne Fechan	93	54	43	10	18	9	10	5
Llanbedr	296	204	219	186	59	46	52	69
Partrishow	71	43	44	34	13	12	11	12
<i>Monmouthshire</i>								
Fwthog	132	65	64	36	28	15	17	16
Lower Cwmyoy and Bwlch Trewyn	355	257	311	152	81	57	65	57
Upper Cwmyoy	231	154	112	74	53	30	24	23
Total	1277	843	848	529	282	191	200	194
% change since 1841	0	-34	-34	-59	0	-31	-29	-31

Sources of historical evidence

In the context of wider regional and national circumstances, community historians have used a variety of approaches to interrogate available historical information and interpret changes in local society. Michael Williams argues the case: “The study of people and change in selected localities ... shows a potential for satisfying our need of relating ordinary lives to larger events, and for simultaneously gaining a view of the process of change as it happened to the common people”.¹¹ From this perspective, professional and amateur historians alike, have faced problems connected with the authenticity of records and objective measurement of historical events from available information.¹² This challenge of blending quantitative measures of social change with the qualitative recollections of residents is now being addressed in the developing field of

applied historical studies.¹³ Here, interdisciplinary studies have reinforced and cross-fertilised the interpretive skills of the community historian with the wider theoretical and statistical perspectives of the social scientist.¹⁴ In that setting, the field of population geography, as evidenced in this study, connects locally important demographic themes to the concepts of space, place, and environment.¹⁵

A wide variety of historical source materials were examined to reconstruct the sequence of, and reasons for, changes in the distribution of settlement within the study area (Fig. 1). Tithe records provided benchmark evidence on the spatial pattern, ownership, and occupation of domestic settlement, and distribution of agricultural holdings *c.*1840.¹⁶ These parish-based documents were matched against census enumerators' books for the decennial censuses of 1841–1881 to determine significant changes in population structure and the distribution of inhabited houses. Four editions of Ordnance Survey maps published since 1871 and catalogues of property sales provided additional cartographic evidence. This exercise was continued into the next century using a raft of land tax returns, church records, school logbooks, electoral registers, and estate papers. These records—prepared for divergent administrative, fiscal, and ecclesiastical purposes—identified cases of abandonment and dereliction, which were then scrutinised by a panel of six well-qualified octogenarians with intimate lifetime connections to the farming community. Each informant was interviewed independently. Discussion focused on a micro-print of the tithe map, annotated with farm boundaries, and the sites of inhabited buildings. For most of the homesteads abandoned after 1880 panel members could reach a consensus on the last generation of occupiers and

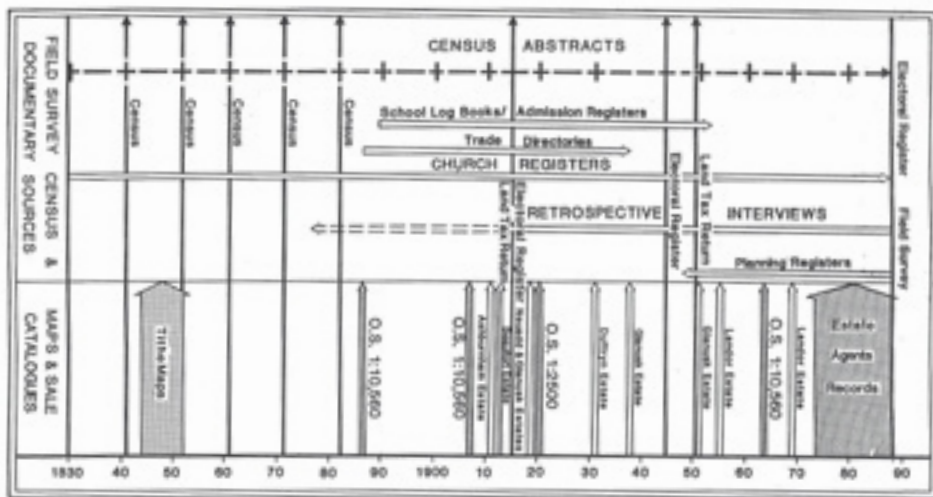


Figure 1. Principal sources of information.

decade of abandonment, and, where appropriate, they sketched the circumstances connected to land sales and inheritance, and the practice of farm amalgamation.

Depopulation: pattern and context

The dispersed pattern of settlement shown as Figure 2 is typical of upland Wales.¹⁷ Since 1840, there has been a significant decline in the stock of inhabited

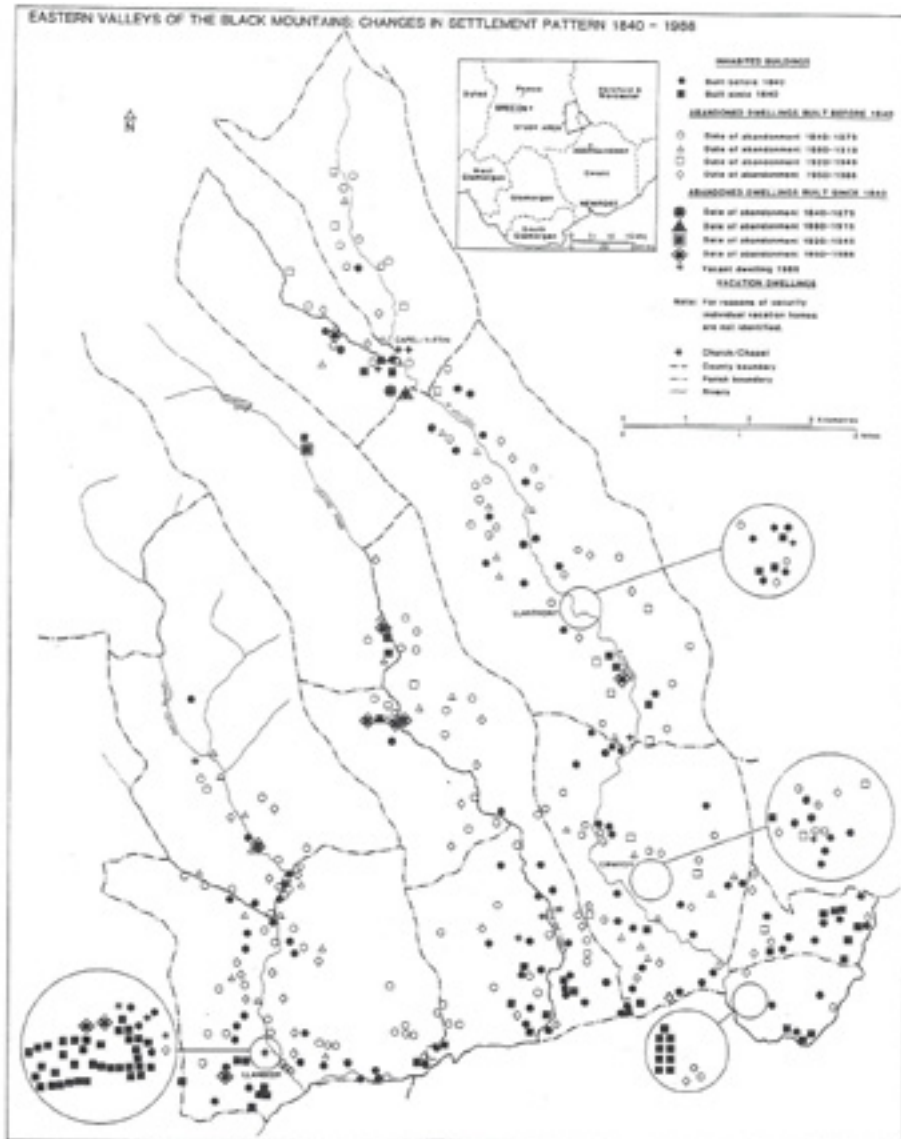


Figure 2. Changes in the settlement pattern 1840–1983.

buildings. There are spatial and topographic trends in this process of settlement change. Between 1840 and 1879, 119 homesteads were abandoned. Notable clusters at the head of each valley were complemented by a group two kilometres north of Llanthony and a scattering on the hillside above Llanbedr. In the next 40 years, a further 35 homesteads, in similar locations, fell into decay.¹⁸ This trend persisted after 1920 when 18 abandonments were recorded, including several cottages on the moorland fringe. These changes resulted in a marked reduction in the median altitude of inhabited buildings from 210 metres for homesteads built before 1840 to 130 metres for those of more recent construction. Figure 3 confirms that vacation (second) homes, mainly buildings released from permanent occupation since World War I, have a median altitude of 265 metres.

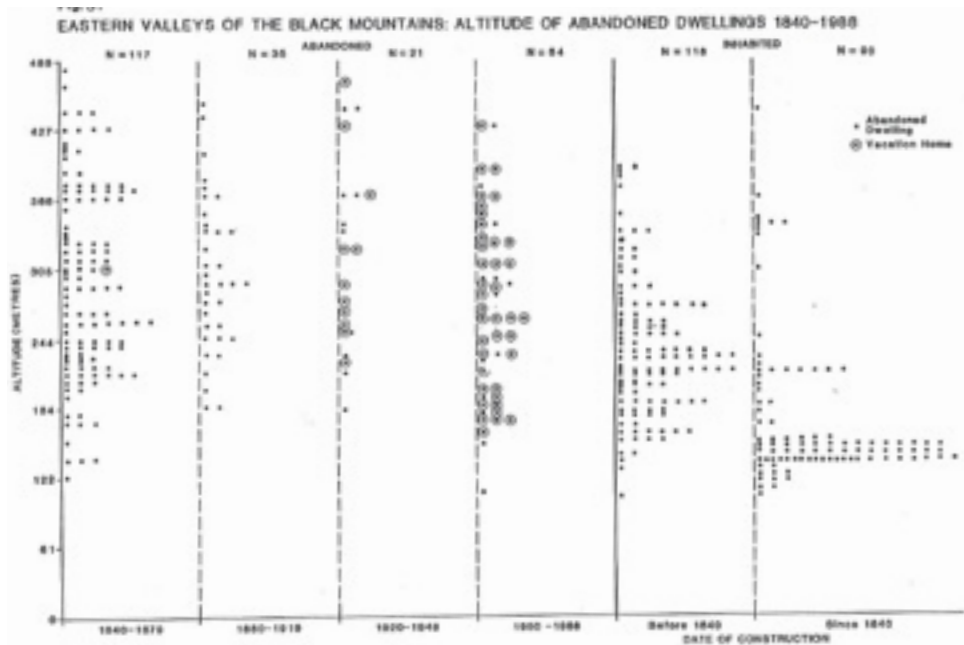


Figure 3. Altitude of abandoned dwellings 1840–1983.

These trends in the density and distribution of domestic settlement, and associated decline in population, relate to developments in the economy and institutional setting of agriculture. In 1840, 44 percent of the enclosed agricultural land belonged to major landowners (Fig. 4). An equivalent acreage was owned by private landlords, some of whom lived in the valleys. The owner-occupiers who farmed the remaining 12 percent of the land included smallholders in Bwlch Trewyn, Glynfach and Glasbury, Fwthog, and Llanbedr. It is significant that most of the cottages in the hamlets of Cwmyoy, Llanbedr,

and Llanthony, together with scattered homesteads at the margin of enclosed land on the valley sides, belonged to the principal landed estates (Tab. 2).

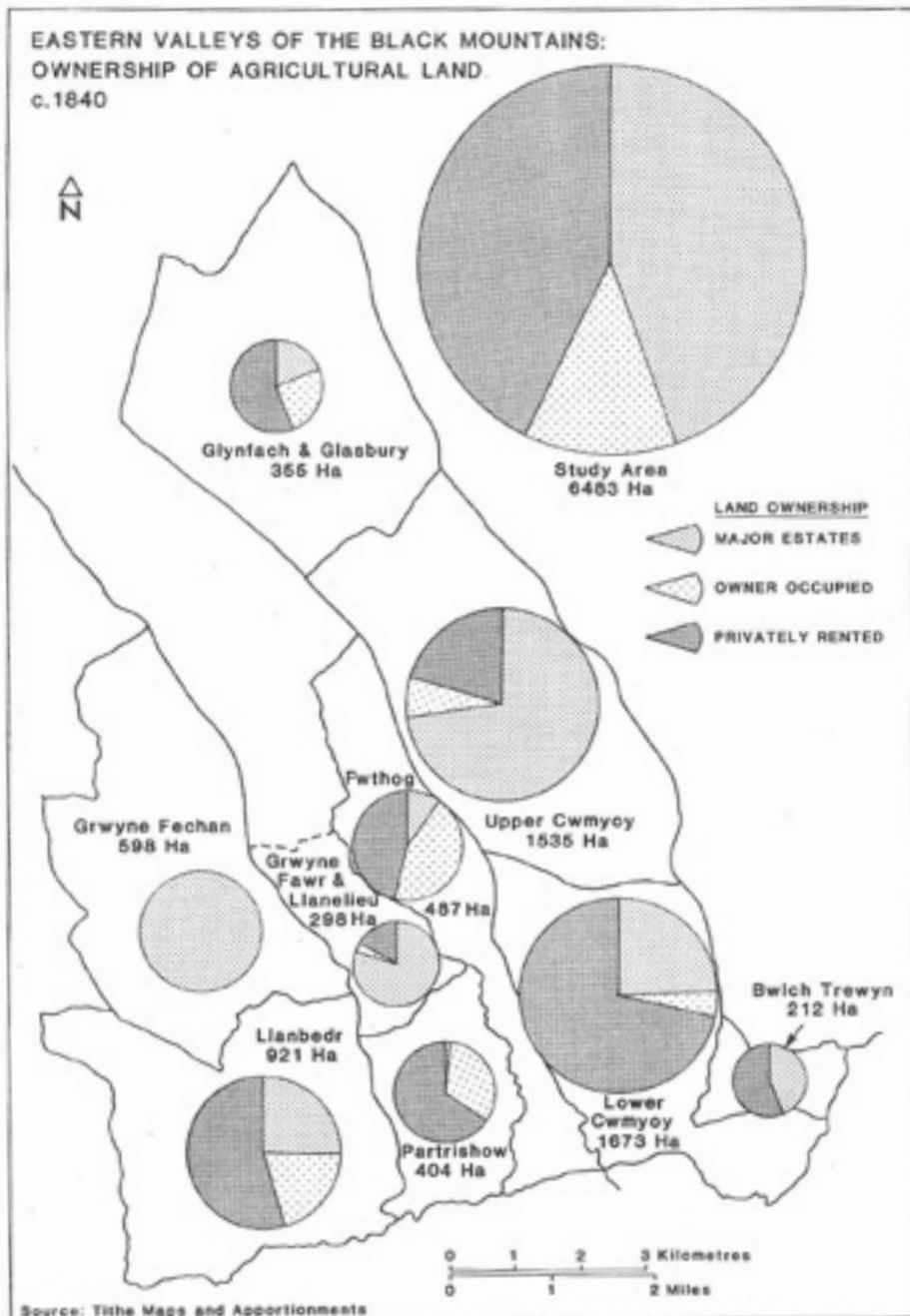


Figure 4. Ownership of agricultural land c.1840.

Table 2. Ownership of housing stock *c.* 1840.

Parish	Major estates	Owner-occupiers	Private landlord	No.	Total %
<i>Powys</i>					
Glynfach and part of Glasbury	6	14	7	27	9.5
Grwyne Fawr and part of Llanelieu	8	0	0	8	2.8
Grwyne Fechan	15	1	2	18	6.3
Llanbedr	15	11	30	56	19.7
Partrishow	1	6	6	13	4.6
<i>Monmouthshire</i>					
Fwthog	4	9	11	24	8.4
Lower Cymyoy and Bwlch Trewyn	55	11	18	84	29.5
Upper Cwmyoy	37	7	11	55	19.2
No	141	59	85	285	100
%	49	21	30		

Commercial livestock production, geared, in part, to the demands of urban markets in the South Wales Coalfield, formed the backbone of the agricultural economy. The agricultural holdings were largely self-sufficient, producing fodder crops and benefiting from sheepwalks on the mountain. In 1840, 53 percent of farm management units (*i.e.* holdings under a common management) covered less than 16 hectares; only 17 percent exceeded 40 hectares (Fig., 5). Since then fundamental changes in local agricultural systems and patterns of property ownership have reduced the number of farm management units from 210 to 93, 48 percent of which exceeded 40 hectares. These processes have resulted in a continuous trickle of redundant agricultural homesteads. Several factors had precipitated these changes in farm structure. In the 1870s and 1880s, the major landowners and private landlords—confronted by the national economic depression—became increasingly reluctant to negotiate new and separate tenancy agreements for the small agricultural holdings in need of costly repairs to homesteads and outbuildings. In parallel, and subsequently, the vagaries of land inheritance produced situations where widely separated holdings became united in a common, and more labour efficient, management unit.

In the early decades of the twentieth century, the break-up and sale of land from several estates including the Beaufort (Llanbedr), Glanus (Grwyne Fawr, Grwyne Fechan, and Llanbedr), and Neuadd (Llanbedr), together with the sale of holdings by private landlords in the interwar years, offered further opportunities for farm amalgamation and, consequently, the abandonment of

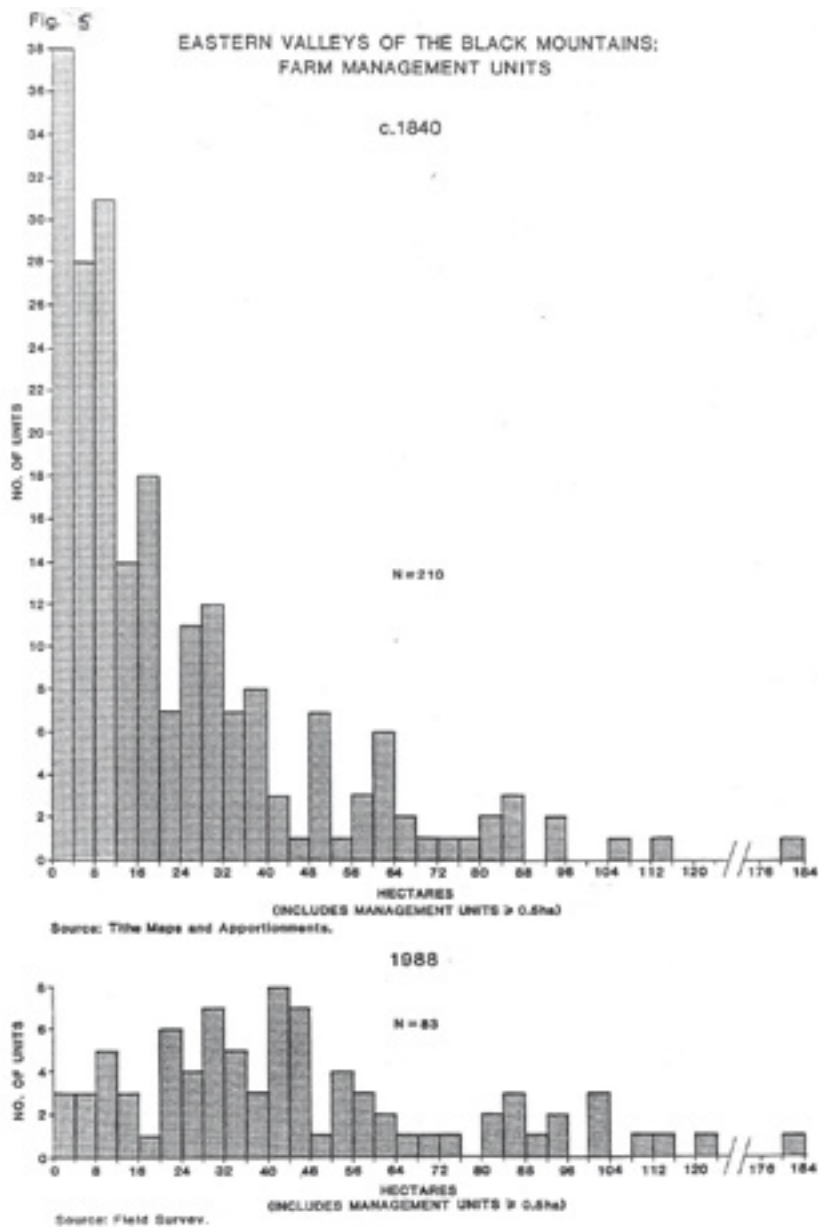


Figure 5. Farm management units 1840 and 1983.

homesteads at a time of contraction in the agricultural workforce and out-migration from the valleys. In the 1930s, too, the Forestry Commission planted seven holdings in Grwyne Fawr, and this acreage has been gradually extended—as the Mynydd Ddu Forest—to cover almost the whole parish, together with

large tracts of unenclosed moorland. Meanwhile, in the 1950s, the extensive Landor Estate in the Honddu Valley was dismembered, mainly by private treaty with tenants.¹⁹

Post-World War II, across the region, state intervention in agriculture through the Hill Farming Act (1946) and Agriculture Act (1947) and, later, European Economic Community directives for Less Favoured Areas stimulated investment in agricultural land and rural infrastructure.²⁰ These incentives encouraged more progressive farmers to consolidate assets by purchasing and renting additional land. In the Black Mountains, these developments stimulated the release of yet more dwellings from permanent agricultural occupation to become vacation homes.

Repopulation: characteristics and implications

Seasonal repopulation has actively re-shaped the demographic balance of Black Mountain parishes since World War II. This variant of the counter-urbanisation (pro-rural migration) process, conceptualised by Lewis and Maund²¹ in a model of rural social change, provides a research framework with three constituent themes: first, the interaction between market demand and planning control in the period 1947–1983; secondly, the social characteristics of the second home owners; and, thirdly, the demographic implications of the seasonal repopulation process.

Market demand and planning intervention until 1983

Since 1945, there has been a substantial and suppressed demand for vacation homes.²² Field research in the Black Mountains identified four characteristics: first, the steady trickle of applications made by local farmers and retained architects in the early 1970s for planning permission to convert derelict homesteads into holiday cottages; secondly, the inflated auction prices realised for properties presented to the market; thirdly, the existence in a competitive housing market of an informal grapevine of local informants (including existing owners of vacation homes) advising ‘clients’ of impending sales; and, fourthly, the growing trend for second home owners to purchase properties from the permanently-occupied sector of the housing stock, including small farms. (To protect personal security, the locations of 53 second homes (identified from field study) have not been symbolised on Figure 2).

Policies for development control enforced by the Brecon Beacons National Park Authority and, before 1974, its predecessors in Breconshire and Monmouthshire, had successfully thwarted transactions that involved more than a minimum amount of structural change in a dwelling.²³ The local planning authority determined each planning application in respect of building conversion on its merits and without discrimination against second homes. Entries in local authority planning registers confirm that, since 1947,

permission for extensive rehabilitation has been granted in seven of the 18 cases submitted to the Planning Committee. Successful applications were able to confirm that the basic structure of the building was complete, adequate services were available, and the situation for rehabilitation was deemed satisfactory in other respects. Meanwhile, several applications for new residential building had been rejected on grounds of unproven agricultural need. In contrast, 16 of the 20 applications for the conversion of a building (*e.g.* school, non-Conformist chapel, corn mill) to residential use had been approved. There are special cases, too, where planning consent had been granted for conversion of a barn, outbuilding, or derelict cottage to accommodate an agricultural worker, but where conditions attaching to agricultural occupancy had been subsequently relaxed.

Unlike the situation reported in parts of Welsh-speaking north Wales in the 1970s, there was no evidence of tension between local residents and ‘incomers’ with regard to cultural values.²⁴ Throughout the period 1945–1983, the aggregate demand for vacation homes has remained buoyant. However, the convenient segmentation of housing stock into components described as permanently occupied and vacation homes is not straightforward. Field investigation confirms that whereas some second homes have been sold and re-sold as vacation homes; four have reverted to permanent occupation. There are also instances of two or more second homes being owned by an extended family living outside the region.

Meanwhile, some modernised vacation homes have been retained as investments and rented seasonally as holiday accommodation. County planning committees and the National Park Authority had no authority to regulate the process of seasonal repopulation by direct intervention in the housing market, nor could they prevent the amalgamation of farm holdings and sale of surplus buildings. Figure 6 substantiates these processes. It represents the origins, transfers in ownership, and subsequent habitation profiles for an indicative sample of cottages, farmsteads, and school buildings transformed into vacation homes since 1945. Typical features throughout the region include: property transfers occasioned, either exclusively or in combination, of private treaty, estate agents, and public auction; the subdivision or physical extension of existing dwellings consequent on a change in ownership (evident in three cases); the existence of intervening, but short, periods of dereliction; and sales of land from small farms to finance house conversion and modernisation into a second home.

Social profile of vacation home owners

Field survey across the region in 1985, enumerated 53 second homes and 206 dwellings in permanent occupation. Few retirement migrants and regular commuters to urban employment were identified. Evidence from personal

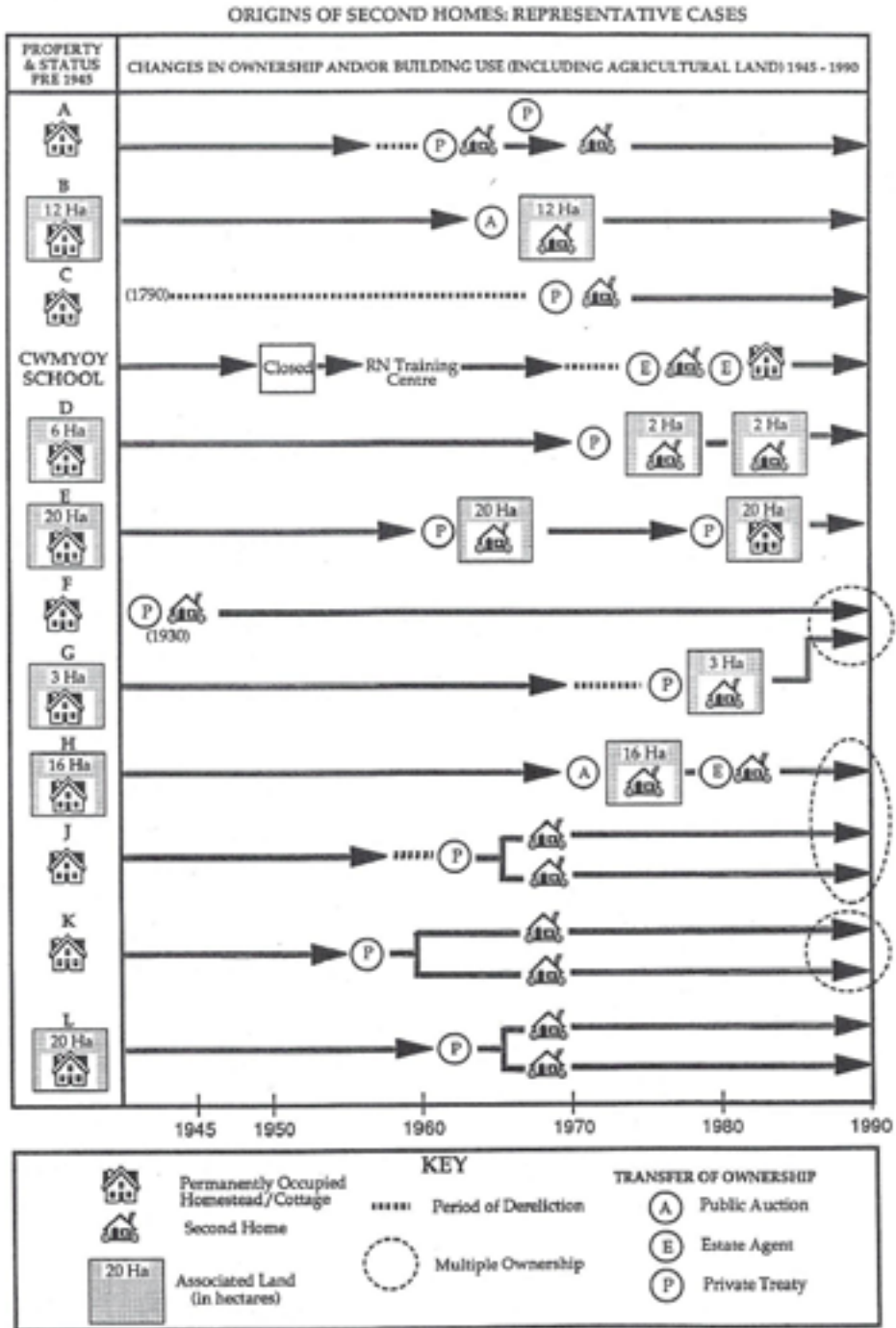


Figure 6. Origins of second home: representative cases 1983.

interviews, mailed questionnaires, and long-distance telephone conversations, contributed towards a profile on second home ownership. This confirmed that over 90 percent of the vacation homes had been designated since 1950 (two had been first occupied by wartime evacuees) and 40 percent had been re-built from the shells of long abandoned homesteads. The remainder included dwellings occupied until purchase by private treaty or (in a booming market) at public auction. Restoration and modernisation of properties (some benefiting from local authority grant-aid) had normally involved local firms of builders. The majority of owners were characterised by professional or managerial backgrounds with first (and even second) homes in London, the South East, and Bristol-Bath regions. They had been attracted to the Black Mountains by the quality of landscape, seclusion and, in the case of the Honddu Valley, its reputed literary and artistic heritage. Several had previously devoted annual holidays in the region to the search for a suitable property; others had retained the services of an estate agent or local 'informant'. For many, the opening of the Severn Bridge in September 1966 had reduced time-distance separation between first and second home. Improved accessibility allowed a comparatively high level of seasonal occupation, even in the winter months. In 1983, for example, one third of the vacation homes had been occupied for over 100 nights.

Throughout the region, the demand by outsiders for vacation homes had impacted the stock of occupied agricultural holdings: one third of the properties secured had more than 0.4 hectares of accommodation land. Four had more than four hectares of land and had previously been worked as viable hill farms. Nine of the new owners leased-back land to neighbouring farmers, whilst two had become 'hobby' sheep farmers in their own right. The owners were invariably concerned with both the amenity value of land and its agricultural potential. Three had received government grants for land clearance, whilst others demonstrated a commitment to environmental conservation by planting shelter-belts of broadleaf species.

Demographic outcomes

Changes in the distribution of settlement had consequences for the demographic structure of the region.²⁵ Three ancillary investigations undertaken in the Honddu valley, for instance, have demonstrated long-term changes in population profile, an appreciable reduction in the density of kinship arrangements in farming families, and the support of the Landor estate in maintaining stability in the farming community. The first micro-level study focused on a quantitative measure of population change in Glynfach.²⁶ Here, a population of 84 (44 males, 40 females) living in 15 dwellings in 1851 had fallen to 22 (10 males; 12 females) resident in seven permanently occupied houses in 1983. The second investigation focused on changes in kinship density.

Property sales to second home owners and farmers moving into the region had inevitably re-structured the spatial network and density of extended family connections in the region. In 1920, 53 percent of the occupiers of the 45 farms and cottages in the parishes of Glynfach and Upper Cwmyoy had been related; this proportion had reduced to 34 percent of the 29 occupied dwellings in 1989.²⁷ The third study confirms the historical importance of large landed estates in reinforcing kinship linkages and engendering community cohesion through tenancy arrangements. An examination of family tenancy successions on 24 farms owned by the Landor Estate in upper Cwmyoy, during the period 1870–1969, revealed that 15 farms had been occupied by two generations in line, seven by three, and two by four.²⁸

With regard to the social resilience of valley communities confronted by changes in population balance and character, it is important to acknowledge the stated ambitions of second home ‘incomers’ into the area. Indeed, a few claimed that the Black Mountains home was a ‘first home’. Elsewhere, they had occupied privately-rented accommodation or housing tied to employment. At interview, one third of the second home owners had pledged they would eventually retire to the property; several, however, avowed that long-term residence would be conditional on health status and continuing personal mobility. Moreover, many ‘incomers’ had regularly shared their properties for recreation with family members and friends. Field survey also identified a cadre of IT-supported and largely permanent ‘homeworkers’ in vacation homes. This cohort included professional persons with backgrounds in corporate finance and legal services, medicine, and publishing, who continued to make necessary, but infrequent, work-related journeys from the valleys to provincial towns and cities, and even to London.

Reflections on context

The British countryside has been widely re-structured since World War II.²⁹ The impacts of increasing modernity and globalisation that are ever-present in the diverse physical and social landscapes of the countryside now constitute an important research agenda.³⁰ Images of the rural idyll and long-held representations of the countryside in popular culture are being challenged in literature, film, and television productions.³¹ Demographic change and housing issues are central to this re-appraisal.³² In the Black Mountains, for instance, there are already several impressive studies of vernacular architecture that link historical studies of building plan and house form to an environmental setting.³³ More recently, too, in-depth interviews with ‘incomers’ have identified a lively personal interest in building history based on title deeds and the habitation record of newly-acquired second homes.³⁴ This study engages with, and extends, that housing agenda in a policy setting of the Beacons National Park. At a regional scale, founded on the datum point of the Tithe Commutation Act

1836, it uses the demographic technique of house repopulation, informed by oral history and archive research, to re-configure the population and housing distributions around serial census points so as to enrich a local understanding of demographic processes.

The study has met its objectives. First, it demonstrates a robust methodology for the spatial and temporal interpretation of population change in the Black Mountains environment. Questions raised by documentary analysis have been interrogated through oral history and field-based investigation has repaid dividends. Secondly, changes in the distribution of population across the region have been monitored and explained by landownership and estate management practices, government policy for agriculture and afforestation in upland environments, and the decision making of farmers intent on maximising financial returns to operational scale within the framework of state intervention. Thirdly, the local impact of nationwide processes of counter-urbanisation (pro-rural migration) have been identified and related to the sustained demand for second homes stimulated by the attractions of the upland environment and improved accessibility. Since World War II, properties have been transferred between the permanent and second home sectors in the regional housing stock. In a digital age, when home-centred and more flexible employment creates a demand for rural life-style, competition from outsiders for permanent homes and the conversion of second homes into permanently-occupied dwellings is likely to increase in the Black Mountains. Meanwhile, there is evidence of integration between the different categories of incomer and the host community through genuine participation in locally-based social activity.

From the perspective of the author, this study of the changing rural landscape has added meaning and purpose to the frequent walks taken through the valleys and across the ridges of the eastern Black Mountains.³⁵ The words of T.S. Eliot in *The Four Quartets* retain a distinctive resonance:

We shall not cease from exploration
And at the end of our exploring
Will be to arrive at where we started
And to know the place for the first time.

The credo of Oliver Rackham stands: “Landscape is more than scenery; it is human history”.

Notes

¹ *The Guardian*, Oliver Rackham Obituary, 20 February 2015.

² See, for instance, Whyte and Winchester 2004; and Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs 2011.

³ Since authors have used the concept of rurality in different ways that colour both the content and approach to research questions, a ‘thumbnail’ of the writer’s experience and commitment to rural landscape is offered as clarification. These complex interpretive issues are addressed in Cloke 1994.

⁴ Coleman 1961. The survey in Brecknockshire was coordinated by Curtis Grove, MA, FRGS, then Head of the Geography Department at the Grammar-Technical School, Brecon. Teams of ‘A Level’ students from secondary schools across the county were deployed to record (on 1:10560 scale base maps) evident land use distributions based on a standardised (nationwide) scheme of 32 land use, cropping, and vegetation categories.

⁵ My wife’s family, the Jaspers, were first enumerated at Llywn Celyn Farm in 1871 having previously been tenants at Little Llwygy Farm across the Honddu valley. Through family succession, my late father-in-law, John Jasper, continued to farm the 140 acre holding (with mountain grazing rights) until the early years of World War II when the family (my late mother-in-law, Gladys Powell, was brought up at Penyrwlodd Farm on the borders of Upper Cymyoy and Capel-y-ffin) removed to Church Farm at Llanddewi Rhydderch (near Abergavenny) to expand their farm-related dairy business. My wife (née June Jasper) was the last infant to be born at Llwyn Celyn. In 1958, her uncle Tom Powell and his family took the tenancy (and subsequently purchased) Llwyn Celyn Farm. Tom Powell’s sons sold the house and farm buildings to The Landmark Trust in 2014 (Stanford 2018). I have enjoyed many a splendid Christmas supper in the original Hall.

⁶ Findings from a larger-scale research project sponsored by the Social Science Research Council (1979) and Nuffield Foundation (1983) were first presented at three international conferences: The Second British Dutch Symposium in Rural Geography, University of Amsterdam, September 1986; The Institute of British Geographers’ Annual Conference, University of Leicester 1990; and at the Colloque sur Les Mutations dans le milieu rural, Université de Caen, 1992. Evidence was restyled and presented as ‘Population change in the Black Mountains 1840-1983’ at the Crickhowell and District Local History Society, October 2017; the Powys Family History Society, January 2018; and the Talgarth Local History Society, November 2019.

⁷ Osborne and Tricker 2001.

⁸ McCaw and Howell 1943.

⁹ The technique of house repopulation is described in Henstock 1996 and Kain and Prince 2000: 123-5. The potential of this analytical technique for demographic analysis is demonstrated by Gant 1986.

¹⁰ This regional analysis excludes the transient ‘navy village’, Blaen-y-cwm, built to shelter the workforce deployed on the construction of the Grwyne Fechan reservoir 1911-1928. The village population peaked at over 400 and was serviced by a school, a police house (with cells), and a mission room. The phased construction and abandonment of this ephemeral settlement is chronicled in Tipper 1985, with photographs for 1914 (p. 31) and 1925 (p. 81). Further evidence of settlement form is provided by Osborne 2005.

¹¹ Williams 1996: 4-5.

¹² These issues are discussed and illustrated in Baker, Hamshere and Langton 1970.

¹³ Drake 1973.

¹⁴ A carefully-argued justification for quantitative history is presented in Floud 1973: 1-6.

¹⁵ Bailey 2005: 10.

¹⁶ This particular role of the tithe maps and related apportionments is illustrated by Coppock 1958: 292-298.

¹⁷ Bowen 1962. Regional trends to this point in time are discussed by Champion 1981.

¹⁸ The harsh environmental conditions characterising these areas of marginal agriculture are exemplified by Gant 1984.

¹⁹ Super 1954.

²⁰ Beresford 1975 sketches the legislative background to post-war regional changes in agricultural productivity. In parallel, the near-contemporary social dimensions of rural change are examined in Newby 1979. Meanwhile, Bowler 1985 draws together relevant agrarian themes associated with the UK’s entry into the European Economic Community.

²¹ Lewis and Maund 1976.

²² Bollom 1978.

²³ Brecon Beacons National Park Committee, *National Park Plan*, 1977; Brecon Beacons National Park Committee, *Black Mountain Study Report*, 1979.

- ²⁴ Gant 1990.
- ²⁵ For further in-depth analysis of the concept of counter-urbanisation (pro-rural migration), refer to Grafton 1982; Cloke 1985; and Halfacree and Rivera 2012.
- ²⁶ Gant 1990.
- ²⁷ Gant 1991: 292-3.
- ²⁸ Evidence abstracted from research notes connected to an undergraduate Cambridge University Social Anthropology dissertation submitted in 1980. Kindly made available by Mrs M. Levinson, Richmond upon Thames.
- ²⁹ Marsden et al. 2000; Beesley, Millward, Ilbery and Harrington 2003; Orton and Worple 2013.
- ³⁰ Haigron 2017.
- ³¹ Halfacree and Rivera 2012; Shucksmith 2018; Hall 2020.
- ³² Satsangi, Gallent and Bevan 2010; Hodge 2016.
- ³³ Well-researched examples include McGraghan 1982, Redwood 2005, Fairclough 2018, and Stanford 2018.
- ³⁴ Working practices and representative source materials are examined by Adolph 2006.
- ³⁵ Since 2007, the annual Crickhowell Walking Festival has included at least 30 guided walks, of different lengths and levels of difficulty, that cover the valleys and intervening ridges of the area examined. For a typical presentation refer to Crickhowell Walking Festival 2020.

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NOTES AND QUERIES

GRWYNE FECHAN AFTER EIGHTY YEARS¹

PRYS MORGAN

There had been such a heavy snowfall on the last day of January 1939, that it looked unlikely that T.J. Morgan² (the present writer's father) would be able to get to the remoter corners of the Grwyne Fechan valley to complete his task (Fig. 1). But, by the end of the first week of February, on a Friday morning, the thick snow was confined to the hilltops and the road from Radyr as far as Crickhowell offered no challenge to the blue Morris Eight, registered DNY 616. When the young university lecturer in Welsh asked for information in Crickhowell, he was told that he could get past Llanbedr up into Cwm Grwyne. He drove past Llanbedr and upwards through light snow, but seeing he had to get to two farmhouses, he realised he must park on the roadside and get to them on foot. He was immediately overwhelmed by the magical silence and beauty of Grwyne Fechan, all glittering in midday sunshine, and was humbled by a sense of awe (Fig. 2). For the only time in his life, he felt part of something cosmic, filled with utter purity, a feeling of being part of a cosmos that was just being created and before the arrival of life. He shook himself out of this mystical mood of simplicity and innocence, trudged down through the snowy valley bottom towards a stream and a narrow field and stumbled across a primitive stone chapel. Two hundred yards beyond the chapel, he found the first of the two farmhouses he



Figure 1. T.J. Morgan as a young man.

Private collection

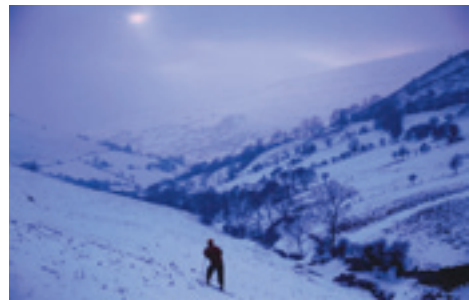


Figure 2. Cwm Milaid, winter 1962/63.

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geograph.org.uk/p/901731

must visit. He saw an old man cutting wood outside the cottage, and there were six sheep. The old man called them his *mocion* (from *mamogion*, ‘wethers’).

There were five people in Grwyne Fechan who spoke Welsh, all over eighty, but none had spoken it to anybody else for many decades. The old man (John Williams y Felin) was astonished to hear Welsh from the lips of a young man; the language being something already belonging to the past. T.J. Morgan reminded him that he had been up the previous year to record the dialect of the old widow of Glanyrafon, with the help of BBC engineers, and now he wanted to record him and the others. John Williams fondled the fur of his sheepdog as he pondered an activity that seemed from another planet. Morgan prompted him that this would be a good chance to get a record of the Welsh of him and his neighbours, Ann Edwards, Lemuel Edwards, old Miss Parry, and the old man up at Cwm Pitt. Williams acquiesced to be recorded on Monday and even agreed to go and see the widow of Glanyrafon, to arrange for her to make an improved recording. Morgan then trudged back through the snow, and the mystical awe returned, but this time with an indescribable sense that all things through the cosmos were well. He felt nervous about putting such thoughts down on paper for fear of being thought a ‘toy saint’, as he put it.³

Morgan, taking seriously the task he had been set by the University of Wales Board of Celtic Studies, decided to drive back on Sunday to confirm the plans for recordings, and, having chatted with John Williams, went to meet the congregation coming out of the little chapel. Five people came out after the afternoon service, including the old lady who spoke Welsh, and she explained to Morgan that the service was late because the young preacher (a student from the Calvinistic Methodist college at Trefeca) had lost his way and had forgotten to turn down towards the valley bottom at the road junction (Fig. 3). She gladly agreed to be recorded, although she had never seen a gramophone.



Figure 3. Grwyne Fechan lane.

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geograph.org.uk/p/876567)

Morgan already had experience of recording Welsh dialects during the previous year, a few in the Vale of Glamorgan, Llanharan, and Pendoylan, for example.⁴ The present writer recalls that he said that the easternmost speaker was an old farm worker from the Usk valley who had spent a lifetime labouring

on farms around Raglan, by then living in retirement with his daughter in Newport. They were all good examples of the Gwentian dialect, but he found that the dialect of eastern Breconshire was—rather like his own dialect of the Swansea valley—a dialect similar to that of eastern Carmarthenshire, overlaid with several features of the Gwentian, such as the ‘hardening’ or unvoicing of the consonants, turning the usual ‘g’, ‘b’, and ‘d’ into ‘c’, ‘p’, and ‘t’, hence ‘*mamogion*’ had become ‘*mocion*’. Morgan himself turned *gwrando* (listen) into ‘*grindo*’ but he found that Breconshire speakers even turned ‘*gwraig*’ (wife) into ‘*graiḡ*’ and ‘*gwolith*’ (dew) into ‘*glith*’. He was also surprised to hear them use ‘*pleto*’ (‘to argue’ in the Swansea valley) as the normal word for ‘speak’. They referred to Abergavenny as ‘*Fenni*’ not the usual modern form of ‘*Y Fenni*’. Some of the speakers were born around 1850 and so their Welsh sounded very old-fashioned, as were other matters: John Williams reckoned his farmland in ‘*tsiaeniau*’ (chains), for example. Sometimes, the very brief recordings only caught a fragment of what had been an entertaining conversation, as when Mrs Jones of Bwlch, not far from Grwyne Fechan, recalled her enjoyable family outing to Brecon to see the last public hanging! They were aware of how rapidly Welsh had disappeared from Grwyne Fechan, for when they were children in the mid-nineteenth century, all the families in Grwyne Fechan had been Welsh-speaking, save one family of Scots.

The present writer recalls that when he asked his father how he knew of these ‘Last of the Mohicans’ in Grwyne Fechan, he said that he had gone up to Brecon to see Professor John Evans (1858–1963), Congregational minister and professor at Brecon Memorial College. Morgan remembered that his lodgings were icy cold, and the landlady had made the tiniest fire he had ever seen, merely two small coals, in the grate. Evans was from Llangrannog and remembered his family being thrown off their farm in 1868 for voting Liberal. He had ministered in Radnorshire and Breconshire since 1887 and was familiar with any surviving Welsh speakers in the Welsh borderland. He lived to be almost 105, a perfect example of the adage ‘Live in the cold and live till you’re old’.⁵

Morgan was aware that his task was a race against time, being a complicated process of getting the five speakers to agree to be recorded, and then to arrange for the BBC sound engineers to be available to bring their van and long cables across fields to the farmhouses. Morgan also needed to be free from his academic teaching (and adjudicating in the Denbigh Eisteddfod in August), so he made a plan to get up to the remotest farms, such as Cwm Pitt, in September 1939 (Fig. 4). Then, tragedy struck, with the outbreak of war. One immediate effect was that the military commandeered all the cables of the BBC, and all private cars were stopped, the little Morris Eight included, and the present writer recalls from childhood seeing it jacked up on bricks in its garage. The dialect project had to be abandoned, and Morgan was sent into the Ministry of Labour and National Service as a civil servant. By the time war was over in

1945, Morgan, who returned to his old job at the Welsh Department in University College, Cardiff, knew that all the old people in Grwyne Fechan he had hoped to record had died, and no one had any idea what had happened to the recordings that had been made.

In 1951, Morgan was appointed Registrar of the University of Wales, and this meant working on the other side of Cathays Park, in the University of Wales Registry (Fig. 5). Not long after he took up his new post, there happened to be an accident in the basement of the Registry, a water leak or something similar, and the Registrar and the caretaker went through the extensive basement rooms to look at the damage. The Registrar realised that no one had told him of the obscure storerooms of the Board of Celtic Studies, lost in the dimmest recesses of the cellars. As they shone torches into the Celtic Twilight, Morgan realised that he was looking at a decayed pile of old BBC records. He had his Eureka moment as he recognized them as his old dialect records from the 1930s, but his heart sank as he grasped that they were hopelessly damaged by damp. He went upstairs to his office and immediately telephoned one of his old students, Vincent Phillips, who had recently been appointed as the dialect specialist at the newly opened Welsh Folk Museum at St Fagans near Cardiff. Phillips thought that something might be salvaged from the wreck if some BBC sound experts could clean and repair at least some of them, and so he took them away. It is gratifying that at least some were repaired, including those of the Vale of Glamorgan and, what is most important, some of the Grwyne Fechan voices, to form part of the new national archive of Welsh dialects.



Figure 4. Milaid Isaf, 1940.

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geograph.org.uk/p/709752)



Figure 5. T.J. Morgan at his desk in the University of Wales Registry, Cardiff.

Watercolour by Prys Morgan

It is also gratifying that there was a surge of interest in these recordings at the time of the splendid Abergavenny National Eisteddfod in 2016, and the present writer was asked several times to speak on his father's tragically curtailed project of 1939. This outburst of Welsh enthusiasm in the Usk valley caused many to wonder what sort of Welsh had (so recently) been spoken in the Black Mountains. Twm Morys (son of Jan Morris) for example, who had spent part of his childhood in the district, not only had written in 2012 an article on the project for the journal *Barddas*, but also, with the folk group, Bob Delyn a'r Ebillion, wrote a ballad to commemorate John Williams y Felin, which he dedicated to the children of the modern Welsh-language school at Abergavenny.⁶

T.J. Morgan himself was sad that so many of the voices had been lost for ever during the war, but he used to say that he also regretted all the records that he had dreamed of making, but which personal circumstances had frustrated. The saddest case was that of two Welsh-speaking brothers, old farmers on Pengam Moors at the eastern edges of Cardiff itself, on the estuary of the river Rhymni. They had quarrelled, and so when Morgan had been to see the one, the other refused to see him, and under no circumstances would either agree to converse together. If they had conversed it would have made a gem of a recording. And so, another Welsh dialect died away, unrecorded. There is the subject of a sermon somewhere in that.

Notes

¹ The first half of this article is based on an essay by T.J. Morgan entitled 'Grwyne Fechan'. See Morgan 1939; 1945; 1954.

² Thomas John Morgan (1907–86), native of Glais, Swansea, lecturer in Welsh at University College, Cardiff, 1930–51, Registrar of University of Wales, 1951–61, Professor of Welsh, University College, Swansea, 1961–75. See 'Morgan, T.J.' 2000; Walters 1979.

³ Morgan, perhaps influenced by his then favourite author, Aldous Huxley, wrote some pieces on mysticism in literature. For example, Morgan 1951.

⁴ Morgan had been given the task of recording dialects because he had written on neglected south Wales dialects, see Morgan 1937, and also 1938, the latter by Jane Rees on the Snakestone of Llansamlet. See also Jones 2000 for Breconshire dialects.

⁵ John Evans (1858–1963), see 'Evans, J.' 2001.

⁶ Twm Morys 2012 for the article, and 2017 for the song, Cân John Williams. Williams' recorded voice opens the song.

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A VERY RARE DOCUMENTARY MUG

IEUAN R. EVANS AND DAVID JONES POWELL

Description

Height 37cm (3"). Diameter of base 8.3cm (3¼"). Top (8.6cm (3⅜")). Gilded Inscription: Elizabeth, Lloyd, Nantquerred, 1813. Bordering the inscription on both sides is a gilded wheat plant with ear. No marks identifying the manufactory.

The pearlware body of slightly tapering form with indented footrim is hand-thrown on the potter's wheel and very finely potted. The inscription and accompanying gilding is well balanced and precise in its execution identifying the work of a professionally trained artist/gilder. The oblong, applied handle is decorated with gilded tracery. It is believed that the mug was a product of the Cambrian Pottery for the reasons explained below, despite the fact that the handle shape has not previously been seen on any of their wares.



Mike Chappell

Cambrian Pottery

Nantquerred, correctly spelt Nantgwared, is a farm in the village of Llywel, Trecastle. The sheer quality of the mug, and the proximity of Llywel to the town of Swansea (35 miles distant), makes it likely—despite no identifying factory marks—that it was made at the Swansea Potworks, established by William Coles (1764–1778), and, following his death, renamed the Cambrian Pottery (in operation 1778–1870).¹

The site of the Potworks is known as the Strand and was leased from Swansea Corporation. In 1777, it was visited by William Dillwyn from Delaware County, Pennsylvania, who was en-route to Ipswich to marry his cousin, Sarah Weston. William Dillwyn's grandfather, also called William Dillwyn, emigrated c.1690 to join the Quaker Community in Philadelphia. He originated, according to one source, from the Llangorse area of Breconshire², although another source identifies him as being from Herefordshire.³

William Dillwyn's next visit to the Potworks, now the Cambrian (Pottery), was in 1802, when he paid £12,000 for the lease and a seven-tenth share in the pottery for his son Lewis Weston (born 6 August 1778). By this time, the pottery was a well-established business, managed by George Haynes who had developed the pottery on the lines of Wedgwood's Etruria Works, Staffordshire. He had gathered together a top class team of professionally trained engravers, enamellers, modellers, china painters, chemists, and potters.

In 1802, the Cambrian was visited by Horatio Lord Nelson and Lady Hamilton, who were on their way to Pembrokeshire. As a result of the visit, a dinner service was commissioned by Lord Nelson, and Lady Hamilton received a present of a cream jug decorated by Thomas Pardoe.

It is against this background that we have identified the mug as a product of the Cambrian Pottery.

History of the Mug and its Owners

At some point in its history, the mug must have left Lloyd family ownership, as, to its base is attached a printed label: "G E H Bents, Dealer in Antiques 131 and 151 Albany Road, Cardiff", with "Swansea" written in pencil. As far as can be established, this dealer was in business in the 1950/60s.

The mug was purchased by a descendent of the Lloyd family in the 1970s and was in her ownership until she passed away, subsequently sold by the estate to reputable antiques dealer Havard and Havard Cowbridge, from whom it was acquired by the current owner.

How was it that a farm in the wild, wet, western uplands of Breconshire in the early-nineteenth century became the home of a small, sophisticated piece of china from the Swansea pottery of the late-eighteenth century?

The recipient of the mug was Elizabeth Lloyd, born in 1808 into a family of landowning farmers and the only child of Watkin and Mary (or Maria) Lloyd, late of Blaenclydach and then of Nantgwarded. The Lloyd family had been at Blaenclydach since at least 1770, when Watkin's, and his elder brother David's, father, another David Lloyd of Blaenclydach, was High Sheriff of Breconshire (as it then was). Their uncle was David Watkins of Aberllech in the adjoining Cilieni valley, who built the present Aberllech House at Pentrebach Llandeilo'r fan (or "Llandilo")(*sic*). We believe he gave land in Pentrebach for the new chapel at Beilidu, which the Brecknock Society and Museum Friends recently visited, and he followed David Lloyd of Blaenclydach as High Sheriff of Breconshire in 1786. In 1802, David Watkins of Aberllech died and left his new house and estate (including Nantgwarded) to his nephew David Lloyd at Blaenclydach. David Lloyd died in 1826 and his son, Elizabeth's cousin, David Watkins Lloyd of Aberllech became mayor of Brecon in 1845 and, in turn, High Sheriff in 1862. Thus, in 92 years the Lloyd and Watkins families of Blaenclydach and Aberllech provided three High Sheriffs of Breconshire.

But what of Watkin Lloyd and his family? They were *scweiar bach*⁴ and not *grandees* like their fellow “rights” claimants on Fforest Fawr (the Great Forest) of Brycheiniog: John Jeffreys Pratt (later Marquess Camden)—the Jeffreys connection; Sir Charles Morgan (later Lord Tredegar), or even Penry Williams of Penpont. They were more Ridds of Exmoor (Lorna Doone) than their contemporary Bennetts of Hampshire (*Pride and Prejudice*). Their contacts with the outside world would have been mainly through farming, but Nantgwarded, Blaenclydach and other farms on the Aberllech Estate all claimed traditional “rights” on the Great Forest of Brecknock (Fforest Fawr), as did Watkin Lloyd’s own eight farms.⁵ A fellow claimant was Col. John Llewelyn of Penllergaer Swansea who owned farms in the Ystradfellte and Senni areas—and whose daughter married Lewis Weston Dillwyn of the Cambrian Pottery—as were the Bassets of the Vale of Glamorgan.

In 1785, 15 years after being High Sheriff (a Crown appointment), Elizabeth’s grandfather, David Lloyd of Blaenclydach, was leading the opposition to a case brought by the Crown against an Ystradfellte farmer for impounding stock from outside the Lordship of Brecknock. This was on the grounds that the Crown had no right to license grazing on Fforest Fawr to licensees outside the Lordship. The Crown won this first round. David Lloyd does not seem to have been inhibited in opposing the case despite his earlier appointment by the Crown as High Sheriff. That is, any more than did his brother-in-law, David Watkins of Aberllech. This David Watkins, who, as High Sheriff in 1786, was duty bound to empanel the jury in the case in which his brother-in-law at Blaenclydach was a leading supporter of the defendant and who, in the previous shrieval year, had noted his brother-in-law, publicly by letter, as a supporter in general terms. It did them no good; the defendant lost.

Twenty seven years later, in 1813, the Crown returned more aggressively to the fray, accusing Elizabeth’s father, Watkin Lloyd, and another, of trespassing with his stock on Fforest Fawr. It is indicative of his status that he was described as “Watkin Lloyd of Nantgwarded, Gent”, whilst his co-defendant was styled as “David Jones, farmer”. A meeting of supporters was called at Defynog, at which over 80 farmers and big and small landowners, including John Jeffreys Pratt, Sir Charles Morgan, and Penry Williams, signed a deed supporting the defendants and guaranteeing their costs. If anyone wishes to know what a “grandee” looks like they have only to see Lord Camden’s portrait in *y Gaer*; nothing could be “grandee-er”! The events of 1813 were no doubt a huge relief to Watkin Lloyd and a worthy occasion to think about a memento for the family. By this time he will have met Lewis Weston Dillwyn, one of the influential backers of his potential bill for legal costs. The Cambrian Pottery mug, with its date of 1813 and inscription to Watkin Lloyd’s daughter, Elizabeth, was the result.

The controversy was not finally laid to rest until the Commons Registration Act 1967, which arose out of uncertainty over the legal status of Fforest Fawr.

Was it common land or still private enclosed land, as it had been originally as a Norman hunting forest in the eleventh century? The case against Watkin Lloyd was eventually compromised and, in 1819, the Great Forest Award was published under the Enclosure Acts. The Award itself provoked further uncertainty by its wording, which rumbled on, enthusiastically stoked by John Lloyd of Dinas (“The Radical”), into the twentieth century.

In 1822, the quarrels over the Award began anew, with over 90 of the new “Commoners”—including the previous “names”—but now incorporating (relevantly for this article), the name of L(ewis) W(eston) Dillwyn, the proprietor of the Cambrian Pottery. His name replaced that of Penry Williams of Penpont, who was third named but was thereby relegated to fourth. A strong letter was sent to the Commissioners under the Award: John Cheese and Henry de Bruyn of London.

In 1842, Elizabeth, aged 34, married the Rev. John Morgan Downes, graduate of Jesus College Oxford and son of John Downes of Penybryn, Defynog (who had himself attended the 1813 Defynog meeting and signed the deed guaranteeing Watkin Lloyd’s expenses). So the families were well known to each other and to the district. John Downes was a businessman and an entrepreneur as well as a landowner. He conducted a tannery in Defynog (hence The Tanner’s Arms?) and owned eight farms—as did each of Watkin Lloyd and his nephew David Watkins Lloyd—all claiming rights on Fforest Fawr. He built and let a tucking mill on the Usk; sold a lot of timber off his farms; owned a number of houses; was a trustee of the new Wesleyan Chapel at Defynog (though, like his co-trustees, he was still a member of the established church), and was Treasurer of Defynog Free School. The Downes family originally seem to have arrived from Herefordshire, mainly as farmers, and throughout Elizabeth’s life they farmed substantially in the county through various branches at Talgarth, Tredomen, Bronllys, Talybont (Maesmawr), Gilestone (Chilson), and Brecon St. Johns (Brynant. Where is this now?). In 1844, Mrs. Downes a “Widow of Maesmawr” gave up “two of her farms” following her husband’s death and sold over 1,000 head of stock by auction.⁶

So Elizabeth should have been comfortably provided for when she married Rev. John Morgan Downes, Vicar of Llanspyddid. He also seems to have had South Wales connections, perhaps as a curate at Margam, as his name pops up there from time to time during the 1840s, officiating at weddings. Certainly, he seems not to have been present at home on census night in 1851, where Elizabeth was with her two children: her son Jesse Lloyd Downes (born 1846), and Muth (or possibly Ruth?) E. Downes (born 1849). Both these children were born at Defynog, presumably at Penybryn amongst the Downes clan. Her mother died in 1845, and Elizabeth was widowed in 1852. She died at 6 Glamorgan Street, Brecon (another Downes address) in 1859. Her father, the donor of her christening mug had died, apparently intestate, four years

previously on 1 May 1855 at Trecastle. She had taken out Letters of Administration to his estate as a “Widow and only child of Watkin Lloyd” in the Consistory Court of the Archdeaconry of Brecon in August 1855. In 1865, a certain Rev. William Henry Downes of Maesmawr, one of her Executors, took out a grant *de bonis non administratis*⁷ to the personal estate of Watkin Lloyd “not exceeding £20 in value”. What was this about we wonder?

John Lloyd of Dinas (“The Radical”) records that in 1905, the Lloyd Barrows of Aberllech (successors of David Watkins and David Lloyd of Aberllech) and the Lloyd Downes of Newton Abbot (successors of Watkin Lloyd Nantgwaredd) were still in possession of most of the farms that their families had owned in 1819.⁸ The (single-barreled) Downes family had rather dropped out of the picture by 1905, surprisingly, given their apparent vigour in the previous century. The Lloyd family gave up farming and also gave up the yeomanry for the professional class (and perhaps faded as country people having a business in the countryside). The Lloyd Barrows seem to have been military/medical men and the Lloyd Downes became Vicars and, finally, an architect in South Devon. Who knows by what circuitous route Elizabeth’s christening mug made its way back to Breconshire? Surely, such a beautiful and fragile artefact was not found “in a skip” as so many objects seem to be—if one watches The Antiques Roadshow!

Acknowledgements

Fergus Gambon, Head of British Ceramics, Glass and European Glass, Bonhams, London

Mike Chappell, Brecon Photography

Janet Watkins, Trecastle, Chair Brecon Group, Powys Family History

Notes

¹ Grant-Davidson 2010; Nance 1942.

² *Ibid.*

³ Painting 1987.

⁴ Little Squire. A derogatory term for someone who aspired to a higher social status.

⁵ Lloyd 1905.

⁶ Jones 1909–30 has genealogies and descriptions of the major Breconshire families.

⁷ Lloyd 1905.

⁸ A grant *de bonis non administratis* is a special type of grant of representation which must be obtained when the sole or last surviving personal representative of a deceased person’s estate, dies after taking out the grant of representation, but before completing the administration of the estate.

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LETTERS

MEREDITH JONES: LAND SURVEYOR AND CLOCK-MAKER?

Dear Editor

The last issue of *Brycheiniog* contained a major article by Dr. Bob Silvester on the eighteenth-century land surveyor Meredith Jones, who was active between 1743 and 1766, and who carried out a great deal of his work in Breconshire.¹ The point was made that, apart from the fact that he sometimes stated on his maps that he was based in Brecon, almost nothing more is known about him.

In May 2019, my wife and I visited Caldicot castle near Chepstow, now in the ownership of Monmouthshire County Council. In the nineteenth century, it was bought by the entrepreneur and antiquarian Joseph Cobb of Brecon, and was the subject of heavy restoration by him (see the 2017 article on Joseph Cobb in *Brycheiniog* by Glyn Mathias²). One room in the castle contains some items of country furniture, owing their origin to the Cobb family, and among them we noted a clock carrying the name “Mereth Jones, Brecon” (Figs. 1 and 2).

Intrigued, I consulted the article ‘Telling the Time in Breconshire’ by Dr William Linnard, published in *Brycheiniog* in 2012.³ There was no mention of Meredith Jones, but when I contacted the author, an old friend



Figure 1. The clock in Caldicott Castle.

John Gibbs



Figure 2. A close up of the clock face.

John Gibbs

from forestry days, he replied saying that in his book *Wales: Clocks & Clockmakers* (published 2003) there was the brief entry: JONES, Meredith. Brecon. Longcase clock c. 1750 in Caldicot Castle.⁴

He commented that, from my photographs, he could add, “this is a conventional country clock with square brass dial and a 30-hour movement in an oak case. The hood of the case has quite unusual pediments, and the frieze is decorated and inscribed ‘T T’, which presumably are the initials of the case-maker or of the original owner. The clockmakers did not make their cases – that was a separate craft.”

He continued, “Since this is the only clock by Meredith Jones that has been recorded, he cannot have been a prolific maker, but it all seems genuine enough, and I can see no reason to doubt that he was the actual clockmaker. With the quaintly abbreviated engraved Christian name and also the carved case initials, this clock has a couple of nice individual features”.

He further added that, although land-surveying and clock-making would have been an unusual combination of skills, it was recognised that “In rural Wales in the eighteenth century, some clockmakers did supplement their income in various ways, *e.g.* by farming, labouring, keeping a pub, and such like.”

After being informed of this, Bob Silvester made the rather similar comment, “Many surveyors followed other professions in addition to land measuring and there are occasional gaps in Meredith Jones’ output which could perhaps be explained by his having to make ends meet by doing something other than map-making.”

It seems rather appropriate that Meredith Jones’ only known clock should have ended up in Caldicot Castle which, according to Bob Silvester, is also the subject of one of his most complex maps!

JOHN GIBBS

Notes

¹ Silvester, R.J. 2019. Meredith Jones: An Eighteenth-Century Breconshire Mapmaker. *Brycheiniog* 50: 25-55.

² Mathias, G. 2017. Cottages and Castles: Glimpses of Victorian Brecon and Some of its Prominent Citizens Through a Study of One Property in the Nineteenth Century. *Brycheiniog* 48: 131-147.

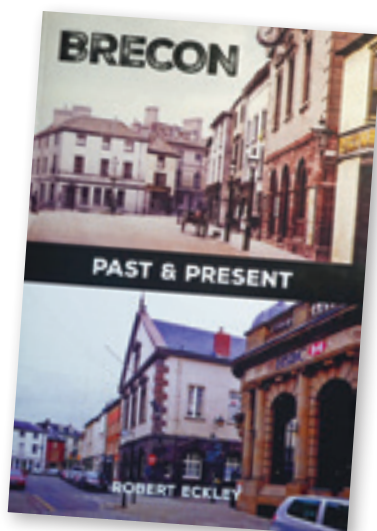
³ Linnard, W. 2012. Telling the time in Breconshire. *Brycheiniog* 43: 115-128.

⁴ Linnard, W. 2003. *Wales: Clocks & Clockmakers*. Ashbourne: Mayfield Books.

BOOK REVIEWS

Brecon: Past & Present by *Robert Eckley*. 2019. Self-published. Paperback: 72 pages. £11.

Historic photographs are a very accessible way of approaching change and continuity in urban and rural landscapes from the mid-nineteenth century onwards. Old photographs are, of course, profusely available in national and local archives, libraries, museums, commercial image libraries, and in personal collections. To meet the demand for access, a significant feature of local history publication over the last 30-40 years has been books featuring historic photographs, often on a county, town, or community basis. More recently, institutions, societies, and individuals have been posting images of old photographs on the Web, including voluntary platforms such as the *Memories of Old Brecon* public Facebook group.



Brecon has had its fair share of publications of historic images and there is now a range of them to consult. A collection of views of Breconshire compiled by Gwyn Evans and David Hames in 1983 was self-published in monochrome with captions, rather than textual comment.¹ In 1992, David Moore published a far more extensive collection of monochrome photographs of Brecon, in the *Britain in Old Photographs* series, based on a major exhibition held in the Brecknock Museum.² This incorporates consistent quality images, authoritative text and captions, and the material is organised thematically, for example, street scenes, livestock, transport, law and order, recreation, and special events. It is particularly strong on images of people.

In 2000, Mike Davies and Gwyn Evans produced *Around Brecon* in the *Pocket Images* series, a small volume packed with consistent quality images with excellent captions, again strong on people and organised thematically covering, for example, pastimes, events, and trades and occupations.³ A final section included contemporary images as Brecon moved towards the new millennium, including the staff of Brecon institutions, such as the museum; images which are themselves now becoming historic. Mal Morrison produced his *Brecon Through Time* in 2012.⁴ This featured monochrome photographs, consistently reproduced, which are here contrasted with modern colour images reflecting change over time, which has become a popular way of presenting historic images. There are helpful notes analysing each pair of images. The modern

'after' photographs do not always quite match the original view of the 'before' photographs, although this is not always easy to achieve.

Robert Eckley's welcome addition to the existing literature, derived from his own collection, and with support from the Breconshire Local and Family History Society, follows the 'past' and 'present' principle. The author has succeeded in matching up the 'then' images with the 'now' photographs as closely as possible, so it really is easy to analyse change over time. A feature of a town such as Brecon is that the iconic views, for example, those of the Cathedral, St Mary's Church, Christ College, the Barracks, the Castle Hotel, and the Castle from the Bridge, have been continuously photographed over time and have seen relatively less change, compared with vistas of more vernacular buildings, rarely photographed, which more often have witnessed transformational change. It is the photographs that only a few people take which can prove more interesting than those which everyone has taken. This volume provides a balance of selection between the iconic and more workaday townscapes. I particularly enjoyed images such as the small cottages demolished at the end of George Street (p. 29) and the former cottages on the left side of Lion Yard (p. 30). Vernacular buildings now lost to us are also portrayed on Priory Hill (p.38) and Dinas Row (p. 54). The collection of images is accompanied by a few historic advertisements for Brecon businesses and image captions, which have been enhanced by some additional detail.

A feature of Eckley's publication is that it captures the variable print quality of the images he has to hand. He also reflects vestiges of colour where present in the original prints. Colour film only began to be widely used from the 1930s, but there were earlier methods of introducing elements of colour into photographs, for example, by tinting selected areas of monochrome images by hand. Such techniques have often proved to be inherently unstable and hence the colour effect degrades over time or prints may become yellowed and faded due to deficient processing or storage conditions.⁵ There is merit in the approach taken in the volume, notably that it addresses the limitation that we tend to view history from the mid-nineteenth to the mid-twentieth century without colour, due to the available photography. Conversely, the other four works I have featured above chose the monochrome only route where it is easier to impose consistency of reproduction, through processing and, more recently, digital manipulation. Some may find the vestiges of colour and other variables of print quality which appear in Eckley's volume interferes with our appreciation of the content of the images, but others will welcome his depiction of the current state of the available prints, 'warts and all'. Certainly, the early colouring techniques and the effects of age add to the authenticity of a historical image, although not necessarily to its accuracy in relation to the colours of the original subject matter.

I would have welcomed a little more information on the provenance of the material. Do we know anything about who took the photographs and/or

published them, or at least some of them? There is an absence of any detail on reproduction rights. Not all the images are exclusive to this publication, for example, the images of the buildings near St Mary's Church demolished to make way for the War Memorial on page 14 were published earlier by Moore in his volume (pp. 18-9), and the image of the last passenger train crossing Mount Street is published in a volume on the Brecon to Neath railway (image No. 10) where it is credited to the Johns/Edge collection.⁶ However, I recommend this book for its balance of images and for the sterling effort made to accurately reflect 'past' and 'present' viewpoints and it is to be welcomed as an additional photographic resource for the study of the history of Brecon.

NIGEL CLUBB

Brycheiniog Editorial Board

Trustee, Brecknock Society and Museum Friends

¹ Evans, G. and D. Hames. 1983. *Views of Old Brecknockshire*. Brecon: Self-published.

² Moore, D. 1993. *Britain in Old Photographs: Brecon in Old Photographs*. Stroud: Alan Sutton.

³ Davies, M and G. Evans. 2000. *Pocket Images: Around Brecon*. Stroud: Nonsuch.

⁴ Morrison, M. 2012. *Brecon Through Time*. Stroud: Amberley Publishing.

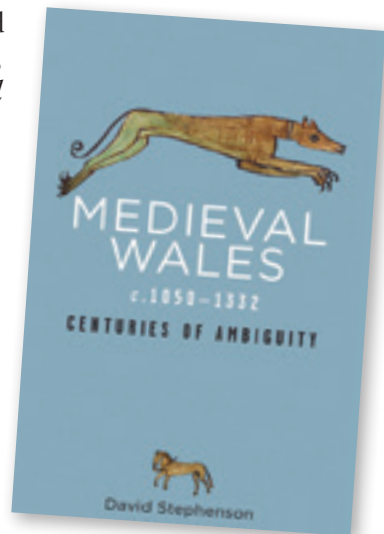
⁵ I appreciate the comments of Ian Savage, Archive Resources Manager at the Historic England Archive, on the technical aspects of this review.

⁶ Mitchell, M and K. Smith. 2004. *Country Railway Routes: Brecon to Neath*. Middleton Press.

Medieval Wales c. 1050–1332: Centuries of Ambiguity by *David Stephenson*. 2019. University of Wales Press. Paperback and eBook: 210 pages. £16.99. ISBN-10:1786833867. ISBN-13:978-1786833860. eISBN-978-1-78683-387-7.

Medieval Wales is the latest book by David Stephenson, following his *Medieval Powys* (2016, and reviewed in *Brycheiniog* 48) and *Political Power in Medieval Gwynedd* (2nd edition, 2014) and a series of articles that have transformed our knowledge of Wales in the Middle Ages.

The book reviewed here has the subtitle *Centuries of Ambiguity* and challenges some of the 'traditional' perspectives, which have tended to focus on the princely rulers of Gwynedd and Lord Rhys of Deheubarth (d. 1197), and then the decline of Welsh power and influence following the Edwardian war. History is always complex and Stephenson's deep knowledge of the sources (Welsh and English) and individuals presents a richer



picture, exemplified by many individual stories of changing fortunes and allegiances.

Chapter 1 gives an outline survey of Welsh political history; Chapter 2 considers the Age of the Princes; Chapter 3, the Marches; Chapter 4, the limits to princely power, and Chapter 5, the limits to princely power. Maps and detailed genealogies help one navigate through lines of succession and marriage alliances, and shifting territorial boundaries.

Brycheiniog 47 reviewed Adam Chapman's important book, *Welsh Soldiers in the Later Middle Ages, 1282–1422*, and Stephenson reminds us of the scale of Welsh involvement in English armies fighting in campaigns in Flanders (nearly three-quarters of some 7,300 men active in 1297-8) and Scotland (10,900 Welsh troops in the Falkirk campaign of 1298). This is much more than a military statistic and had a real impact on life back home in Wales. Stephenson also brings to life the network of cross border and European alliances, and the growing professionalism and size of the Welsh princely court, including: military and ecclesiastical advisors; lawyers; physicians; poets; as well as falconers and huntsmen. And, of course, the recent redevelopment of Amgueddfa Cymru – National Museum Wales at St. Fagans has included a reconstruction of Llys Rhosyr, one of the courts of Llewelyn Fawr (1172–1240).

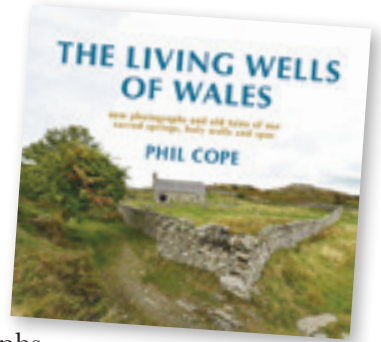
In Stephenson's book, we are also reminded what shifting allegiances meant in practice for those living in Breconshire. In 1217, Llewelyn spared Brecon from destruction in payment of 100 marks, and Einion Sais was required to appear at the Prince's castle of Rhyd y briw (Sennybridge) in November 1271, to provide sureties for his future fidelity. After the conquest, Welshmen also continued to flourish and celebrate their proud lineage and Stephenson concludes (p. 152), "the post conquest decades offered to the people of Wales a kaleidoscopic blend of oppression, suffering, frustration, advancement, accumulation of honours and power". An Age of Ambiguity.

As a footnote, it is pleasing to see that the University of Wales Press had issued this book in paperback and at a price (£16.99), which will attract the general as well as the academic reader; not all publishers do so.

ELIZABETH SIBERRY
Brycheiniog Editorial Board
 Trustee, Brecknock Society and Museum Friends

The Living Wells of Wales by *Phil Cope*. 2019. Seren Books. Hardback: 256 pages. £20. ISBN-10: 1781724962. ISBN-13: 978-1781724965.

In the 11 years since he last wrote about wells in Wales¹, Phil Cope has been busy. He seems to have tramped every single part of our beautiful nation and increased his well count from 42 in his previous book, to over 300 in his latest (albeit he has enlarged his compass to include spas, fountains, and, in one instance, a laundrette (p. 195)). He also, in case you do not know, takes photographs. Glorious photographs. Stop-you-in-your-tracks photographs that simply ooze the beauty, the mystery, and the majesty of one of our most precious assets: water.



Interestingly, the title of this book drops a word used for the previous title: holy. Are our wells no longer holy? Cope takes a nuanced view and explains:

Sacred springs and holy wells are luminous, liminal² places which provide a space at which to consider the connections between rock, sky and water, and an access to wider realities, to other ways of seeing which encourage a dialogue between your god and my god and no god at all (p. 17).

Cope also notes that ‘well’ is a word describing both a source of water and our physical and mental state. ‘Well-being’ could be interpreted as ‘being at a well’. Although Cope readily explains the history of the featured sites, he also draws on myths and legends that have grown over time. He even records current activities at the well, such as leaving ‘offerings’, creating cloutie trees³, and attending dedication services held within the Christian tradition.

As someone who has journeyed to many of the wells Cope covers in his book (and—spoiler alert—appears in a photograph on page 165 when I and two others took Phil to see St Eluned’s Well, Brecon and found out that each of us had a different spot for its location) I saw them through new eyes, in beautiful photographs – yes, but also through the words Cope weaves about his subject. Not all are complementary. Taff’s Well, a rare hot spring, was recently ‘renovated’. Cope complains “its renovation was over powering and inappropriate ... the spirit of the place has been entirely lost” (p. 232). The Physicians of Myddfai’s Well fares no better, recent tree removal leaving a landscape that “resembles the Somme, post battle” (p. 168). Here we find another theme of the book: a need to recognise and preserve these places, not just as convenient water supplies—although Cope, contrasting a visit to Portugal, where every village has its own fountain, to Wales, where health-and-safety precludes such things—but as sites with their own long history and heritage. If Cardiff Castle were allowed to fall down there would be an outcry.

Not so for wells. Even Cope's grand total of wells palls in comparison to those appearing in Francis Jones' classic work of 1954 that lists 1,179.⁴ Where have they all gone? Cope provides a few clues, "many have now been abandoned, some buried beneath piles of rubble, some completely destroyed, ploughed up by farmers ... lost to drainage, to road-widening schemes or built over by a new bridge or housing development" (p. 326).

The Living Wells of Wales is a reminder of what remains, and what might yet be lost. It is a paean from a lost world, where spirits abound, and water is sacred, a gift from the gods. It is also a clarion call to all those who value such liminal places. We cannot let the tide of 'progress' destroy our common past. Wells are 'holy', or perhaps, as Cope titles his book, wells are 'living', and should remain so. This is a superlative volume. I have spent many hours tracing and retracing imaginary journeys through our bejewelled land. Cope's photographs are, rightly, now the stuff of legend and so too will this book become. It is £20. Buy it!

MIKE WILLIAMS

Editor of *Brycheiniog*

Trustee of the Brecknock Society and Museum Friends

¹ Cope, P. 2008. *Holy Wells: Wales - A Photographic Journey*. Bridgend: Seren.

² A liminal place is one occupying a position at, or on both sides of, a boundary or threshold, in this case a metaphysical boundary.

³ A clootie is a strip of cloth, often tied to a tree (which becomes a clootie tree) as a form of offering and prayer.

⁴ Jones, F. 1954. *The Holy Wells of Wales*. Cardiff: University of Wales Press: 9.

Mezzotint and the Artist's Book, A Forty Year Journey by Shirley Jones. 2019. Red Hen Press. Case Bound (limited edition of 100): 74 pages £80. Limp-bound: 74 pages £40.

This book tells the story, through the voice of the Shirley Jones herself, of her journey as an artist and her fascination with the art of mezzotint. Following a talk given by Shirley Jones to the then Powys Art Fund group, three members of the Art Fund were so fascinated by the artist's description of creating mezzotints that they worked with Shirley Jones over 18 months to produce this book, which provides both an insight into the art of creating mezzotints and also an overview of 40 years of fine book printing by Shirley Jones.



The book covers the creation of the Red Hen Press, the trials and tribulations of working alone, finding buyers, coping with challenges with paper, and conflicts over the demand from copyright libraries. It describes the genesis of the artistic ideas that led to the creation of each of her 28 titles produced between 1975 and 2016. The inspiration varies from personal family stories to the rediscovery of medieval Welsh poems, from the travels of Giraldus Cambrensis to the travails of the Epynt clearances. It is a testament to the artist's reputation that that the works of Shirley Jones are now in over a hundred rare book collections and are now being digitised by Cardiff University.

In her introduction, Dorothy Harrop describes the mezzotint as "the most subtle and beautiful method of producing continuous tone ever invented". In her own words, Shirley Jones tells of the time and energy, the failures, and the hard learned lessons that she overcame to master the dark art of the mezzotint.

For poems that are often dark themselves, a mezzotint can work as a perfect counterpoint, offering an image that emerges softly out of its blackness as in this example of dragonfly over the Beacons from her book, *Dark Side of the Sun* (1985) (Fig. 1).

The present book cannot match the special qualities of Shirley Jones' own Red Hen Press creations, but it does provide a detailed and finely illustrated account of the life and work of an artist much inspired by her response to Wales, its people and history.

The book is available from the Red Hen Press by emailing kenjones32@btinternet.com.



Figure 1.

WILLIAM GIBBS
Chair, Brecknock Art Trust

The Cambridge History of Welsh Literature edited by *Geraint Evans and Helen Fulton*. 2019. Cambridge University Press. Hardback: 854 pages. £100. ISBN-10: 1107106761. ISBN-13: 978-1107106765.

Starting with early medieval Welsh literature, and ending with twenty-first-century writing in both English and Welsh, by authors living both in Wales and the wider international Welsh diaspora, this major work tells the story of one of the oldest literary traditions in Europe. The 35 scholarly contributors highlight

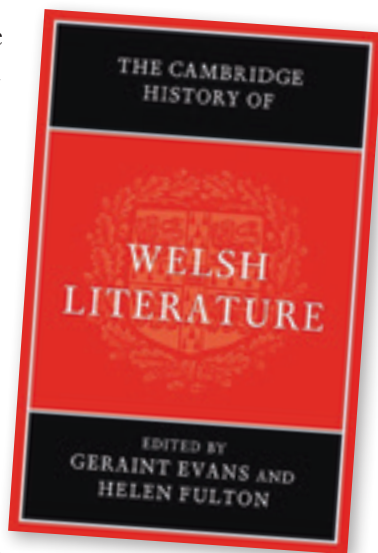
the richness of Welsh literature through the centuries and set it in a wider historical and political context. The fact that it is published by Cambridge University Press, and in English, opens the Welsh literary world to a wide national and international readership and is much to be welcomed. As the editors note in the Introduction, the last similarly titled book on this subject was published in 1955 and much has changed in Wales since then, both politically, post devolution, and culturally.

One review cannot do justice to 854 pages of detailed analysis but some examples will give a flavour of what the book contains and offers. The chapters on medieval Welsh literature discuss, of course, the four ancient books of Wales: the Black Book of Carmarthen; the Book of Aneurin; the Book of Taliesin; and the Red Book of Hergest; as well as the Mabinogion and the courtly poetic tradition. The later brings to mind the conference organised by the Brecknock Society in conjunction with the Centre for Advanced Welsh and Celtic Studies at Aberystwyth and the University of Swansea in Brecon in May 2015 and the insight this gave into the world of Breconshire poets and patrons, such as Thomas Vaughan of Tretower, to whom Lewys Glyn Cothi addressed two awdlau (defined in the glossary as a long poem using strict metre). It has also been suggested that the Red Book may have spent some time at Tretower.

The Tudor period brought major change to Wales and its literature, including the appearance of the first Welsh printed books in London in the 1540s, and the Cambridge History provides interesting detail about some influential figures who hailed from Breconshire, such as John Penry, sometimes described as the martyr of Welsh congregationalism, and Sir John Prise, author of one of the earliest Welsh printed books.

And the chapter on the origins of the Welsh novel includes an interesting reference to a novel *Elisa Powell* by Edward ‘Celtic’ Davies (1795) in which the narrator writes of the delights of a rural town “B”, probably Brecon, to which he has recently moved.

One subject discussed in a number of chapters is the way in which Welsh writers in English were, until quite recently, somehow regarded as separate from the main Welsh literary tradition. Henry Vaughan, the Swan of Usk, is mentioned only briefly but he was, of course, an example of this neglect. In the nineteenth century, major literary figures such as Francis Palgrave, Professor of Poetry in Oxford, sought to correct this and in 1881, the influential historian



and writer Owen (O.M.) Edwards argued that Vaughan deserved more attention than he had hitherto received from his fellow countrymen.

Later chapters discuss the works of David Jones, whose paintings from his time at Capel y Ffin form part of the important art collection at y Gaer. More recent writers mentioned include Christopher Meredith, whose powerful words can be seen on the outside of the Museum, and Robert Minhinnick, winner of the 2018 Roland Mathias Poetry award, as well as, of course, Roland Mathias himself.

The nature of a multi-author work means that there is some overlap between chapters and the richness of the subject makes it inevitable that some names and works will be excluded or given limited treatment. It is, however, a major and much welcomed addition to the bookshelves and something that can be dipped into with pleasure for years to come.

ELIZABETH SIBERRY

Brycheiniog Editorial Board

Trustee, Brecknock Society and Museum Friends

Nature of the Brecon Beacons: A Beginner's Guide to the Upland Environment by *Kevin Walker*. 2019. Pesda Press. Softback: 288 pages. £15.99. ISBN-10: 1906095655. ISBN-13: 978-1906095659.

This book is described as a beginner's guide to the upland environment and its stated purpose is to help those walking through the Brecon Beacons National Park to identify the "animals, insects, rocks or plants that they are likely to see". The author, Kevin Walker, is well known in the local area and has run many courses in navigation and 'hill skills'. In preparing the book, he has drawn on the expertise of many people and this is fully recognised in the acknowledgements and in the legends to the photographs. The book is compact with a strong flexible cover and should therefore slip quite readily into jacket pocket or ruck-sack. It is very well illustrated but the photographs are variable in quality and often too small to be readily interpreted.



After an introduction, the contents are marshalled under five headings. The first of these is "Rocks" and, as someone with no training in geology, I found it very helpful. Also, in talking to a Czech friend who is getting to know the

Brecon Beacons National Park, I was pleased to discover that he also found the descriptions to be clear and concise.

Then follows the section on “Plants”. It begins with lower plants such as mosses, liverworts, and club-mosses; the section on mosses being enhanced by the photographs of Sam Bosanquet. Fungi are given the status of honorary plants although the author does make it clear that the authoritative view would be to put them in a ‘kingdom’ of their own. Most of the species described fall into the category of ‘mushrooms and toadstools’ and it is in this section that I really became aware of the author’s odd decision to list species in alphabetical order by English name. Thus the blackening wax cap is the first fungus to be described while a paragraph on waxcaps in general comes last. The photographs in this section are only of average quality.

After a chapter on ferns, the author moves on to higher plants with a section on grasses, sedges, and rushes; this being followed by one headed “flowers” and another headed “trees”. The section on flowers is 45 pages long and is subdivided into the flowering plants of three site types, described as “upland habitats”, “wet and boggy areas”, and “woodland and hedgerow”. This works reasonably well but the difficulties in making a correct identification are then brought into sharp focus by the author’s practice, referred to above, of putting the species in an order that depends on the first letter of the English name. Thus both bell heather and ling (common heather) appear among the plants of upland habitats but despite both being in the heath family and having pink flowers, they are separated by five pages of descriptions of other plants.

Another barrier to correct plant identification is the quality of the photographs. When it comes to higher plants, I must declare a very strong preference for coloured drawings. To get a photograph that shows the salient features of the flowers, leaves and stems is often very difficult and all too often it has not been achieved here. This part of the book concludes with a short section on invasive plants though this is not particularly focussed on the uplands.

The next heading is “Animals”. Some 60 pages deal with the animal kingdom; the size of each section depending on the number of species covered. I feel that this part of the book is much more effective in meeting the aims of the publication than that dealing with plants, not least because of the quality of the pictures. Very many of which have been taken by people with real expertise in photographing particular categories of animals; Steve Wilce’s bird photographs illustrating this point very well.

The last but one heading “Humans” provides sections on the role of mankind in modifying the ecology of the landscape, whether through farming or forestry: Kevin Walker makes some pertinent observations on the impacts of past and present practices. Some descriptions on archaeological remains and the legacy

of industry follow and—for good measure—some of the myths and legends of the uplands are retold.

A final heading, “Last Thoughts”, contains a useful few pages on the English meaning of Welsh place names, a lists of Reference books, and websites that the author has found useful.

JOHN GIBBS

Brycheiniog Editorial Board

Chairman, Brecknock Society and Museum Friends

Tragic Matilda: Lady of Hay. The Life and Legends of Matilda de Braose by *Dr Peter Charles Ford*. 2018. Amazon Independent Publishing. Paperback: 88 pages. £6.99. ISBN-10: 1729454933. ISBN-13: 978-1729454930.

When I was a child, castle dungeons used to fascinate me. I could scarce imagine what horror it must have been to be confined in such a dark, tiny space with no comforts and, I imagined, very little food. Then it got worse: I discovered what an ‘oubliette’ was. Named from the French verb *oublier*, meaning ‘to forget’, it is usually a small bottle-shaped well set within the dungeon where people were placed, literally, to be forgotten. Such was the fate of ‘Tragic Matilda’ and her son.

Astonishingly, for such an important figure of the past, there is no previous biography of Matilda de Braose or her terrible fate. This is a woman who was married to one of the most significant Marcher Lords, William de Braose (1144/1153–1211), whose fiefdom extended from Gower to Kington, and who was court favourite of King John of England (1166–1216). Neither William nor his wife were particularly kind to the Welsh; in fact, they hated them with a vengeance. William was implicated in the Abergavenny massacre, where he lured three Welsh princes and other Welsh leaders to the castle for a Christmas feast to mark a new era of peace. He then had his men murder each and every one of them. He gained a new moniker for this act: The Ogre of Abergavenny. His wife was no less fearsome. In 1198, Matilda defended Painscastle in Elfael against a massive Welsh assault led by Gwenwynwyn, Prince of Powys. Over three thousand Welsh attackers were killed.



Ironically, since it led to her eventual downfall, Matilda did have a few scruples. When John took the throne in 1199 there had been no clear line of succession. Some claimed his older brother's son, Arthur of Brittany, should have inherited the crown. John demurred and, just to make sure, had Arthur murdered, or so went the rumour. Matilda's mistake, possibly because her husband had quarrelled with the king and John was now seeking hostages from amongst her children, was to repeat these rumours in the presence of royal officials. Unfortunately, John was not the forgiving kind. William was disgraced and exiled, and Matilda, along with the eldest son she sought to protect, ended up at Corfe Castle in an oubliette, or, at least, a cell where they were starved to death.

So, why is Peter Ford, a well-known historian of Hay, writing about her? Well, Matilda's seat was at the castle in Hay where she is credited with building the defensive walls, and the surviving gate, to an existing keep. If one legend is to be believed, she did it all in one night. She clearly feared attack from the Welsh, something Ford speculates may be down to her murderous defence of Painscastle. *Tragic Matilda* is not a lengthy book, but Ford uses his available space, and the available references, to great effect. He recounts the story of Matilda's life, with an emphasis on her connections with Hay and its castle, and also with the Welsh she and her husband fought to subjugate. But he goes further still. Ford considers each of the legends that have grown around Matilda and even ventures some possibilities for their origin. He reviews the legacies of Matilda and surveys the evidence that Clause 39 of Magna Carta (the, so-called, *Habeas Corpus* clause) was as a result of her incarceration without due process. He also explores her prodigious offspring (some family trees have as many as 24 children) and proves the startling assertion that every king since Henry V in 1413 is a direct descendant of this remarkable woman. In a final chapter, Ford considers the literary legacy of Matilda (more in fiction than in fact) and how her story is driving the interpretation of Hay Castle as it emerges from recent conservation work.

The book is a little uneven in places, and it is a shame that budgets did not stretch to some illustrations, but this reviewer found it a terrific read. It most certainly deserves its place on any local enthusiast's bookshelf. It is also available via Kindle.

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