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Editorial



A very slimmed down Hanes this quarter. I presume that most groups have not been meeting unless online. Look at the Builth Wells article though for some very exciting news. Hopefully by next quarter conditions will slowly be getting back to normal. Keep safe everyone.

Hanes is published every 3 months. The next edition is to be published May 1st 2021. Please email any articles or information about events etc. with the heading "HANES" to alan.j.nicholls@btinternet.com by June 30th 2021.

Introducing The Forum

ABERGAVANNY LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY

Contact: Gill Wakley

Email: wakley76@gmail.com

BRECKNOCK SOCIETY AND MUSEUM FRIENDS

Contact: Elaine Starling Tel. 01874 711484

email: evstarling@lineone.net

BRECON LIBRARY

Tel. 01874 62334

BRECONSHIRE LOCAL & FAMILY HISTORY SOCIETY

Contact: Alison Noble – Secretary

Email: blfhsenquires@gmail.com

BUILTH WELLS & DISTRICT HERITAGE SOCIETY

Contact: Anna Page Tel. 01982 553376

Mal Morrison mal911@yahoo.com

CHRIST COLLEGE ARCHIVE

Contact: Felicity Kilpatrick

Tel. 01874 615440

**CRICKHOWELL DISTRICT ARCHIVE
CENTRE**

Secretary: Wendy Parker.

Contact:

archive@visitcrickhowell.co.uk

**CRICKHOWELL & DISTRICT HISTORY
SOCIETY**

Contact: Clive Ralph

Tel. 01873 810262

CUSOP HISTORY GROUP

<http://cusophistory.wix.com/cusop>

HAY HISTORY GROUP

Contact: Peter Ford

Tel. 01497820676

email: pcford1@hotmail.com

www.Hayhistorygroup.co.uk

www.haytours.co.uk

**HEREFORDSHIRE FHS and POWYS
FHS**

email: philbufton@hotmail.com

3, Cagebrook Avenue, Hunderton,

Hereford. HR2 7AS Tel. 01432 355723

**LLANGAMMARCH WELLS LOCAL
HISTORY SOCIETY**

Contact: Sue Lilly

Tel. 01591 610792 Email:

llangammarchhs@gmail.com

**LLANGYNIDR LOCAL HISTORY
SOCIETY**

Contact: Ann Jessopp Tel. 01874

730431

email: dfjessopp@btinternet.com

LLANTHONY HISTORY GROUP

Contact: Oliver Fairclough

Tel. 01873 890 540

email: oliverfairclough@yahoo.co.uk

**LLANWRTYD & DISTRICT HERITAGE
& ARTS CENTRE**

Contact: Rob Thomas

Tel. 01591 610661

email: r.w.thomas@talk21.com

www.llanwrtydhistorygroup.com

LLYN SYFADDAN HISTORY GROUP

Contact: Roger Reese

email: roreese2013@gmail.com

POWYS COUNTY ARCHIVE OFFICE

email: archives@powys.gov.uk

www.powys.gov.uk/archives

Tel. 01597 826088

**REGIMENTAL MUSEUM OF THE
ROYAL WELSH**

Contact: Richard Davies / Celia Green

Tel. 01874 613310

**TALGARTH AND DISTRICT
HISTORICAL SOCIETY**

Contact: Sheila Lovell Tel. 01874

711096

Email: atalovell@btinternet.com

**Y GAER – MUSEUM ART GALLERY &
LIBRARY**

Contact: Nigel Blackamore

Tel: 01874623346

**YSTRADGYNLAIS DISTRICT HISTORY
AND LANGUAGE SOCIETY**

Contact: John Owens

johnowens38@talktalk.net

NEWS AND EVENTS

Brecknock Society and Museum Friends

Whilst the Brecknock Society and Museum Friends have radically scaled back the usual programmes of visits and lectures due to Covid-19, their journal, *Brycheiniog*, has not been affected and will be published as normal in mid-March. There are some unavoidable changes, however. For the first time since they began, the Sir John Lloyd Memorial Lecture had to be postponed in 2020. As well as being a great disappointment, it meant that the journal cannot have its usual printed adaptation of the lecture. Finding its equal was hard, but then the Editor remembered a brilliant lecture he had heard at the Hay Festival in 2019, given by Richard Suggett about the history and recent work undertaken at Hay Castle. An adaptation of that talk forms the lead article in this year's journal. Suggett does not just explore the castle and the subsequent Jacobean house that was built in its ruins, he also puts the buildings in context. Since Suggett makes the point that "so much that has been written about Hay Castle is erroneous", here is a chance to review what really happened.

In the next article, Peter Jones explores Brecon clergy as revealed by the census of 1911. They are a fascinating bunch, and so are their wives, who Jones also interrogates. Ryland Wallace, in his paper, focusses on one clergyman in particular: Revd

Thomas Jones, who was appointed rector of Llanbedr and Patricio in 1860 and remained for 42 years to become the longest serving incumbent of the parish. Wallace outlines Revd Jones' extremely colourful life (women, drink, and sermons) and also that of his son, local cricket star Thomas Babington Jones.

Our Chairman, John Gibbs writes about the hamlet of Cyffredin (near Llangynidr) in his article. He begins in 1587, when estate maps show there was no occupation of the land known as Cyffredin Common. By 1760 this had changed, and most of the land had been enclosed and a number of cottages built. Gibbs traces the history of these cottages and expands on the life of their occupants. In a change of pace, Malcolm Morrison and Jim Davies, in the last of our main articles, tell of the time when Buffalo Bill came to Builth Wells and held, for "one day only" a spectacular show that created a buzz the like of which "will positively never be seen here again" (to quote the advertising hoardings at the time). It makes for an exciting finale.

The Notes and Queries section include noted Henry Vaughan scholar, Jonathan Nauman, who writes about the great Brecknock wordsmith—celebrating the 400th anniversary of his birth in 2021—giving an idea of how God influenced his poetry and life. Vaughan is also the subject of Elizabeth Siberry's Note and Query, tracing the whereabouts of the Vaughan first editions, originally presented to Brecon notary Gwennllian

Morgan and then donated by her to various local institutions. There is also a plea for information on those that are now lost. Glyn Mathias takes on Mordecai Jones in another of his excellent pocket biographies. If you have never heard of Mordacai, he was a coal baron who once invited 650 of his miners to lunch, at his house! Colin Lewis, in the last Note and Query, gives a personal view of the equestrian artist Aneurin Jones and his admiration (shared wholeheartedly by the author) of the Welsh Cobb.

There is a veritable feast of reviews showing that, like *Brycheiniog*, many authors have grasped the opportunity afforded by lockdown to polish and publish their work.

Details of how to purchase a copy are on the website at <https://brecknockociety.co.uk/resources/brycheiniog/>.

Mike Williams, Editor of *Brycheiniog*

Builth Wells & District Heritage Society

Our monthly meetings and activities have had to be cancelled due to current events and our AGM will most likely be on the Zoom platform. This will be confirmed to members in good time with full login instructions. We have tried to keep in touch with our members and friends via mail and our Facebook Page is regularly active with photographs and discussions on a variety of topics.

Builth Museum

There is however some positive and extremely exciting news. We are taking a lease on a building in a very prominent position in Builth Wells High Street. The project is called *Canolfan Dreftadaeth Llanfair-ym-Muallt - Builth Wells Heritage Centre*. The property is double fronted and has two lovely display windows which we will be making full use of. The interior room will be open to the public as soon as the current situation allows and will be used to display artefacts and photographs relating to the town's history and heritage. We will also be taking on the unofficial role of Visitor Centre in order to publicise local places of interest etc. The centre will be staffed entirely by volunteers and will be open daily throughout the summer months with reduced opening hours during winter (depending upon demand). There is a kitchen area where we will encourage older visitors to take a rest for a short time should they need to. This is intended as a short stay (half hour max) area where visitors can take a rest and chat with others and make themselves a cup of tea if they wish. On the first floor is a large meeting room that can be used for a variety of functions including exhibitions and private meetings for the benefit of all of the community, and two smaller office sized rooms that we can make use of. Our collection of photographs and artifacts will remain in its current location on the second floor (the

rarest and most valuable items will continue to be stored in the County Archive in Llandrindod Wells).

This is a huge venture for our society to undertake and we are currently looking into making the centre sustainable in the long term. Society funds will guarantee its survival for the first two years, but this is a long-term project and will require funding from alternative sources. We are currently engaged in looking at potential opportunities and have had donations from local organisations and individuals including one very generous donation from a gentleman in the USA.

At the time of writing the lease is still to be signed but we are confident that the project will come into fruition. It has always been one of the main aims of the society to open a museum in Builth Wells and after 35 years existence it looks like the dream of two ladies all those years ago will finally come true. It is such a shame that one of them is no longer with us to see the vision fulfilled.

The new edition of *Brycheiniog* carries an article about the visit of Buffalo Bill's Wild West to Builth Wells in May 1904. This may be of interest to readers and I believe the new edition of this informative journal will be available around Easter time.

Brycheiniog is published annually by the Brecknock Society.

Crickhowell & District History Society

21 April

Brian Davies: 'Islands in the Channel, Flat Holme, Steep Holme, Caldy and Lundy'

19 May

Dr Naylor Firth: 'Severn Crossings'

This talk will cover the history of the different means of traversing the Severn over the centuries.

23 June

Mrs Jennifer Moody: 'Joseph Harris 1703-1764, Polymath, Astronomer and the King's Assayer at the Royal Mint'

A fascinating insight into the wonderfully rich life of Joseph Harris.

22 September

Elizabeth Sibery: 'Social circles in the late 18c and early 19c in Crickhowell'

An examination of the links between some of the prominent individuals in Crickhowell including the Orientalist Sir William Ouseley, the Strettons at Dan y parc and the vicar Henry Vaughan.

19 October

William Gibbs: 'Theophilus Jones, Thomas Price and a hidden sketchbook'

Mr Gibbs reveals Thomas Price's role in illustrating Jones' book on 'The History of Breconshire'

18 November

Eric Gower: 'The Right Notes at the Right Time-the Story of the Sweetland Organ, St Edmund's Church'

For further information please contact harrietharden@hotmail.com or telephone 01874-830259.

Meetings are on Wednesday evenings in the Clarence Hall. The talk on 18 November will be in St Edmund's Church

Annual membership of the Society is £7. Entry to talks is £3 for members and £4 for non-members.

Website

crickhowellhistorysociety.btck.co.uk

Hay History Group

The group has not met since the lockdown in March 2020 but several of us are doing private research which will be the subject of talks and events when normal life resumes.

Hay Castle Newsletter

At the Castle, work has continued, quietly but consistently, and always with a focus on keeping the team safe and ensuring that Covid guidance is adhered to. Those of you who pass the Castle regularly will have noticed scaffolding coming down, then going

up again, and will shortly see it removed once more. This is all part of the meticulous plan to ensure that works to the exterior, interior, and the grounds, are all completed in the proper sequence.

As staff, we are restricted from going on site as much as we would like, and the same rules apply to us as apply to everyone else. However, whenever we have had trustees or visitors viewing the space, we have been heartened and encouraged by the overwhelmingly positive feedback they have given us. The message that we hear time and time again is that the revitalized Hay Castle is going to be a huge boost for the town, and the surrounding areas. We can't wait to show you around.

Once it reopens, visitors to Hay Castle will be able to view short videos called Hay Memories that were recorded last year. In one of the films, Hubert Williams and Alan Powell recall the two fires of Hay Castle. Hubert was just a young boy when the 1939 fire struck, but it left an indelible memory. Alan was one of the firefighters who attended the 1977 fire, when the Castle was owned by Richard Booth. It is a privilege to be able to record their stories to be enjoyed by generations to come.

We hope to add to our collection of Hay Memories. Perhaps you will be able to tell yours? Meanwhile, it's comforting to think that, in time, just like the two fires, the events of 2020 with pandemics and lockdowns will be ancient history!

We know that for many fans of Hay Castle, the rich history of the building and the surrounding areas is captivating. Even while construction progresses, it can be stirring to stand in the Castle and imagine what the walls have witnessed. Hay is lucky to have a thriving local history scene, with the Hay History Group the obvious first port of call for anyone who is interested.

Those of you who attended the 2019 Hay Festival may well have attended the session on Hay Castle, a talk given by Richard Suggett of the Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Wales. Richard agreed to adapt his talk for an article in *Brycheiniog*, the annual academic journal of the Brecknock Society, and editor Mike Williams told us a little about the piece:

'We are delighted that Richard agreed to work with us on publishing his talk and the result has exceeded our expectations. Richard does not just explore the castle and the subsequent Jacobean house that was built in its ruins, he also puts the buildings in context, showing how the unique position of Hay, at the boundary of several lordships to say nothing of Wales and England, meant that it was always a hugely important location and one that many significant families of the time sought to own and control. Since Richard makes the point that 'so much that has been written about Hay Castle is erroneous,' this is a chance to review what really

happened and, thanks to a recent dendrochronology programme outlined in the article, also when. The article is illustrated with images from RCAHMW's archives and also historical artwork showing the castle in earlier days.

Powys Family History Society

The Powys FHS has, since the last edition of Hanes been invited and will participate in an another On-Line Family History Fair organised by the Genfair organisation, The Family History Show on February 20th 2021, usually an event held at the Bristol University campus which we attend in normal times, there are in excess of 100 societies exhibiting virtually this year. Follow this link below to view them.

<http://thefamilyhistoryshow.com/online/exhibitors/>

Obviously due to Covid-19 the physical checking of Monumental Inscriptions has come to a virtual standstill, but that has not stopped us doing the background preparation work once the restrictions are eased, hopefully before Easter time.

Once checked and published they will be available on our on-line shop at <https://www.powysfhs.org.uk/wordpress/shop/>

We have held further successful zoom general meetings, open to all to join in with the talk, get the link from our Meetings page or from our Facebook page. Contact philbufton@hotmail.com

Our 6th April Zoom monthly meeting will

be with Jackie Depelle and the talk will be Two Wars, Two Wives – the Stage is set. A case study including the First and Second World War years through research into the life and experiences of a British Civilian internee in Germany.

We are still able to do lookups in our society libraries and virtual library collections, contact us via our website.

<https://www.powysfhs.org.uk/wordpress/meetings/>

<https://www.facebook.com/PowysFamilyHistorySociety/>

Phil Bufton

Y Gaer - Museum, Art Gallery & Library

Just to let you know that our library buildings across Powys are now closed in line with the Welsh Government's guidance, but Order & Collect book bags and online services remain available.

This means that there will be no use of public computers, browsing or council services available in libraries until cases go down and the restrictions can be eased. However, Order & Collect book bags can still be ordered and collected from the library door, including volunteer collections for covid-secure socially distanced doorstep deliveries.

Readers can order book bags on our [Order and Collect webpage](#) or call us

on 01597 827460 to tell us what sort of books they like, and we'll do our best to make up a great selection for them. Orders can be placed over the Christmas period, and will be made up once we are back in the New Year. Requests for specific books can also be placed on the library catalogue as normal.

All library books out on loan will be automatically renewed, and no fines will apply, so readers are asked to keep their books at home until such time as the libraries can safely re-open and welcome them back.

Keen readers are reminded that the virtual library will remain open 24/7, with a wonderful selection of e-books and e-audio books available at all times through our Borrowbox app, and a good range of e-magazines and e-comics on RBDigital. Any readers needing help to set these apps up can contact the library service on library@powys.gov.uk or 01597 827460 for assistance.

Ancestry.com remains free to use from home with a Powys library card until the end of March 2021, for family research.

There will also be a range of activities taking place on our social media pages, including the weekly storytimes in Welsh and English. The next title has been chosen for Remote Readers, the library service's new online bookclub – The Living Mountain, by Nan Shepherd will be discussed at 2pm on 29th January. The book can be

downloaded as an e-book or e-audio download, more information is available on our [Remote Readers webpage](#)

I will update you all when there is any change to this information, and should be grateful if you would kindly share with others news of the services and activities which are still available whilst everyone remains safely at home.

In the meantime, stay safe and well, and I hope you have a very enjoyable festive season, even if a little different to normal.

Nadolig Llawen a Blwyddyn Newydd Dda / Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year. Kay Thomas

Ystradgynlais District Heritage & Language Society

Storm Dennis' havoc to 'Teddy Bear Bridge'

The flood in the River Tawe resulting from Storm Dennis on 18th February 2020 caused the collapse of a supporting wall to 'Teddy Bear Bridge' which connects Heol Giedd and Derwen Road. Fortunately no person was injured during this event but severe damage was caused to the supporting wall and the road surface along Heol Giedd. The footbridge, as far as can be seen, remained intact and work on rebuilding of the bridge commenced in August 2020.



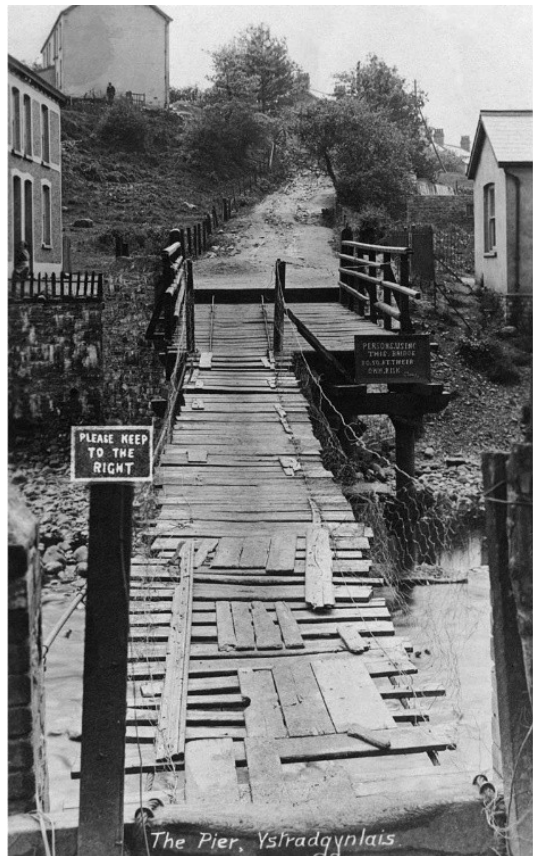
On the 18th December 1911 a large section of the wooden footbridge first erected at this location was washed away by the river. What remained was a section protruding into the river from Derwen Road and hence the name 'The Pier' was given to the bridge then known as Aion Bridge. *(See the photograph above right.)*



On 30th May 1914 the District Council Clerk stated at a Local Government Board of inquiry into the reconstruction of Aion Bridge that the damaged bridge had been constructed some 'three or four years ago' *(implying that it was built in 1910-11)*. A brief history of the bridge was also given by the Rev. D.J. Davies of Aion chapel at the inquest of a young man who fell from the bridge and drowned on 4th December 1915.

He stated it was a long felt need in the district to have a bridge across the river where 'Teddy Bear Bridge' now stands. Its main aim was to connect the 'old and new parts of Ystradgynlais'. The suggestion came from (residents of) Cwmgiedd and, as the result of local announcements, a meeting was held and a committee formed (*quote*) to 'look into the matter'. Mr. Morgan Davies was elected the Committee's Chairman and Messrs. B.L. Thomas and Howell Edwards formed the committee. the Rev. Davies was asked to become the new Chair. The committee resolved to construct some kind of bridge there so an old bridge was bought from the District Council for the sum of £5. The committee borrowed £200 from the Bank so that they could (*quote*) 'fix up' the bridge.

A number of events —concerts, film-shows and a raffle were organized in the village to help fund the project. A concert was held at the Workmen's Hall on 21st March 1914 where members of the Brynawel Band of Hope and other local chapels performed 'Bold Robin and the Babes' along with items by other local artistes. Another benefit concert by local artistes was held at the Cinema on 14th May 1915. A film show by courtesy of Messrs. Edwards and Page was held at their new cinema on 2nd February 1918 and a raffle was held in September 1918.

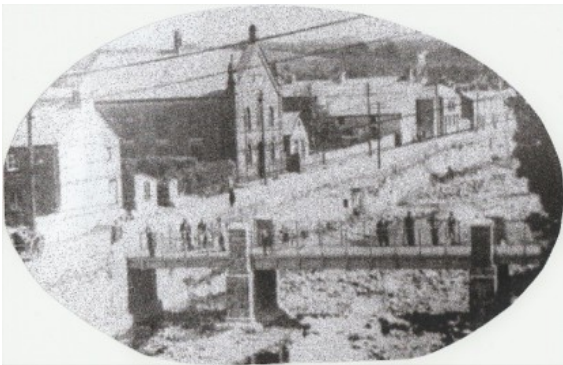


Sometime after the 1911 flood a couple of colliery (steel) ropes were thrown across the river and on these were patched a number of thin boards to create a footbridge. The only support on the sides was a width of wire netting to form some frail fencing for the temporary bridge. (*See photograph above.*)

Arwel Michael, the Society's Chairman, relates how his father, then aged six, had to carry his mother's Singer sewing machine, each Saturday, from his home on one side of the river to his grandmother's home on the opposite side of the river across the rickety bridge shown in the photograph. A precarious task for an adult let alone a six year old!

Representations were made to the District council to take over the portion of the bridge with a view to erecting a substantial structure but to no avail. The Rev. Davies stressed the bridge became such a necessity that the public thought that the District Council should take responsibility for the bridge.

In 1911 the Committee did all they could to encourage the Council to take responsibility and they sought assistance from the LGB (Local Government Board). In November 1911 the Council received notification that the LGB now sanctioned a loan to proceed. The LGB acceded to grant the Council a loan of £850 but, at the onset of WW1, the LGB refused to allow the money to be spent. There followed a great deal of discussion regarding the reconstruction of the bridge in the Council meetings during 1915-17.



Eventually a road bridge for vehicular traffic was constructed. It had central stone pillars to support it. However, these probably led to flooding problems in the area (*See the photograph above taken in August 1962.*)



Some years later (early 1970s?) the steel bridge was reconfigured giving a delta shaped exit onto Heol Giedd (as shown below). This gave a better exit from the bridge onto Heol Giedd.

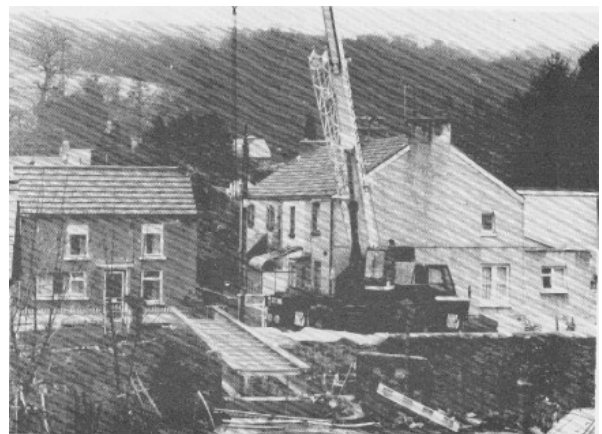


Photo: A. Griffiths Dec. 1979

In 1987 this bridge was demolished and a new footbridge erected at the site. See photograph above. The colour photographs below show the bridge in situ (2012) and after Storm Dennis took its toll. Work began on

the reconstruction of the retaining wall alongside Heol Giedd in late August 2020.

The work of rebuilding the supporting piers is due for completion by the end of 2020 when the bridge will be reattached to them.



But why was it nicknamed ‘Teddy Bear Bridge’? There are two threads which may provide an explanation. The first refers to the gait of persons walking across the rickety bridge swaying from side to side with each step on the suspended rope structure thus resembling the ambling gait of an upright bear. The second derives from the display of the first teddy bear in

the valley in the shop window of a nearby ‘front room sweet shop’ on Derwen Road adjacent to the bridge. The following poem regarding Teddy Bear Bridge was printed anonymously in the local newspaper the *Llais Llafur* on 8th May 1915

*Up and down, from right to left,
Over the Tawe River,
Crooked men and straight men
It makes all sizes quiver.
A bridge of patches and of wire,
A large hole here and there,
And where on earth is there a bridge
Like that of Teddy Bear.
So when you think of crossing the
suspension bridge or pier
Don't dance about.
Or look too much,
Nor fill yourself with beer
Many a friend before today
When crossing it with laughter,
Has found himself beneath the bridge,
And seated in the water.*