



ISSUE 80

May 2023



Editorial

Lots of great history events for you this quarter. Thanks to all our contributors.

Hanes is published every 3 months. The next edition is to be published May 1st 2023. Please email any articles or information about events etc. with the heading "HANES" to alan.j.nicholls@btinternet.com by April 31st 2023.

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 623346

BRECONSHIRE LOCAL & FAMILY HISTORY SOCIETY

Contact: Alison Noble – Secretary
Email: blfhsenquires@gmail.com

BUILT WELLS & DISTRICT HERITAGE SOCIETY

Contact: Anna Page Tel. 01982 553376
Mal Morrison mal911@yahoo.com

CHRIST COLLEGE ARCHIVE

Contact: Felicity Kilpatrick
Tel. 01874 615440
archive@christcollegebrecon.com

**CRICKHOWELL DISTRICT ARCHIVE
CENTRE**

Contact: Elaine Wigzell
CDAC, Ty-y-Fro, Beaufort Street,
Crickhowell, Powys NP8 1BN
e-mail:
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**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.haytours.co.uk

**HEREFORDSHIRE FHS and POWYS
FHS**

email: philbufton@hotmail.com
3, Cagebrook Avenue, Hunderton,
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**LLANGAMMARCH WELLS LOCAL
HISTORY SOCIETY**

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llangammarchhs@gmail.com

**LLANGYNIDR LOCAL HISTORY
SOCIETY**

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730431
email: dfjessopp@btinternet.com

LLANTHONY HISTORY GROUP

Contact: Oliver Fairclough
Tel. 01873 890 540
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**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 – BRECON LIBRARY &
BRECKNOCK MUSEUM**

Tel: 01874623346

**YSTRADGYNLAIS DISTRICT HISTORY
AND LANGUAGE SOCIETY**

Contact: John Owens
johnowens38@talktalk.net

NEWS AND EVENTS

Breconshire Local & Family History Society

We have a full programme of monthly meetings planned up to the end of the year.

June 13th 2023 AGM with short in-house talks, Kensington Baptist Church, 2.00pm

July 11th 2023 Talk on Penpont House and Estate with Jonathan Williams, Kensington Baptist Church, 2.00pm

August 15th 2023 Walk around Brecon to remember the Railways that cross the town with Margaret Sommers and Glen Harris. If you would like to join us, please contact the Society on blfhsenquiries@gmail.com

Members of the Society are currently researching the various pubs, inns, ale houses and temperance houses that have been recorded in Brecon and Llanfaes. We hope to publish a small book with an outline of our research in time for Brecknock History Festival in September. If you have any information on the pubs, please let us know as the research is never finished!

Brecknock Society and Museum Friends

Tuesday 16th May at 6pm

In Brecon Cathedral a talk by Dr Mark Crampin from the University of Wales Centre for Advanced Celtic Studies on the subject of Stained Glass and Saints with particular reference to Brecon Cathedral.

The talk is a joint event between the BS&MF and Brecon Cathedral.

Admission is free but please register with Elaine Starling, elaine

starling10@icloud.com

(Brycheiniog Journals for 2023 will be available at this event)

Saturday 3rd June

BS&MF have arranged a visit to Caerwent, the Roman Site, 11 miles south of Newport(OSST 466 905). Caerwent is the site of the earliest Roman Town in Wales and is managed by Cadw. The visit is being led by Dr Sian Rees an eminent Archaeologist . If you are interested please contact Elaine Starling ASAP for further details. (Email above)

Sister Bonaventure and the Restoration of the King Charles Steps in Brecon - by John Gibbs



Among the best-known features of the Brecon townscape are the King Charles Steps which rise up from the Struet. By the early 1980s the condition of these steps had given rise to considerable concern and this little note describes their sensitive restoration and the role of various people therein. It is based on a file of correspondence which came into my

hands when the Ursuline Convent in Glamorgan Street was cleared and I, with other members of the Brecknock Society, was seeking to ensure that all Sister Bonaventure's research papers

on the history of the theatre in Brecon were safe-guarded.

The story of the Steps is described on the plaque that is located on a wall at the bottom. The text reads "Cobbled footway associated with the visit of King Charles I to Brecon in August 1645. The King stayed with Colonel Herbert Price at Priory House, now the Cathedral Resource Centre, before marching to the relief of Hereford then besieged by a Scots army"; this during the Civil War (1642-1651). The steps have long been a major publicity feature for the visitor (see period postcard)

The starting point of a move towards a suitable restoration was a bequest by Miss Elsie Pritchard. Miss Pritchard was born in Brecon in 1919 and lived there for much of her life. She was much involved in adult education and ran the Workers' Educational Association branch in Brecon for a number of years. Additionally, she was a county councillor, a lay preacher to several chapels in Brecon and a governor of the Mount Street Schools.

She was one of the town's leading local historians, writing articles for *Brycheiniog* (vol XII and XX) and producing a number of pamphlets. Examples included "With Pleasure and Pride - Brecon Beckons from the Past" (1966) and "Brecon - From the Struet" (1977).

When Elsie Pritchard died in 1982, she left a sum of money to Sister

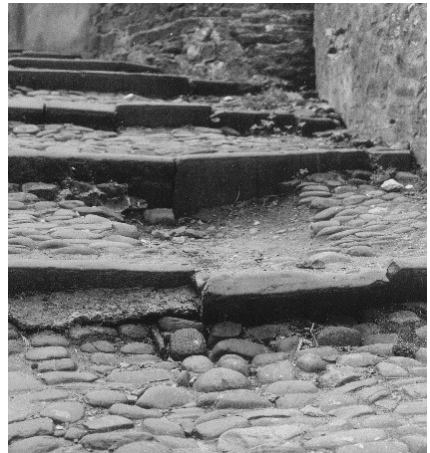
Bonaventure Kelleher of the Ursuline Convent 'as an appreciation of her kindness to me. The money to be used in whatever way Sister Bonaventure thinks best'.



Some of this money went to the Brecon Library and to the Brecknock Museum, but Sister Bonaventure thought that some should also go to the restoration of the King Charles steps. The money was held by solicitors Jeffreys and Powell and she drafted a letter for them to send to Powys Highways & Transportation saying that £3000 could be available from Miss Pritchard's estate as a contribution to a restoration scheme. She also sought the involvement of other bodies such as the Welsh Office. In one of her letters to that body she

noted that the discussions included reference to

- 1) The handrail being designed and approved in advance,
- 2) the stone risers to be re-used and any replacements to be made up to match the original,
- 3) Replacement cobbles to match the originals.



She enclosed high-quality photographs taken by Andrew Bufton to show some of the sections in poorest condition (see example) and went on to say that it was recognition of this and 'the awareness that the steps are in constant use' that had moved her to suggest that some of the money left by Miss Pritchard should be used for this purpose. She added 'The late Miss Pritchard lived in the Struet and was a key figure in the campaign to 'save' the little bridge over the Honddu just opposite 'so it seems fitting in this way also'



Another feature of the file of correspondence is the presence of beautifully hand-written letters by Roger Stevens, Information Officer of the Brecon Beacons National Park. He commented as a post-script to one letter to Sister Bonaventure 'My recollection of a scheme, a couple of years or so ago, to relay the cobbles but to place flat stones as centre treads was correct but we do not know how firmly the Highways Dept wished to incorporate some such feature. My personal view is that the present character of the steps would be lost by this (even if it would be better than a dollop of tarmac!)'. In the event the work was conducted in a sensitive way during 1985 and there is a plaque to testify to this.

Meg Stevens, well-known local artist and wife of Roger Stevens, made this delightful drawing of the Cathedral as seen from the top of the steps and for many years it featured on the front of a town walking trail.

Brycheiniog

Hopefully, the worst of Covid is now behind us but the disruption is continuing. Brycheiniog fell victim to the closure of libraries and research institutions during the last lockdown, meaning that many authors could not get access to check that last fact or reference. Accordingly, everything was delayed and the knock-on effect of this is that *Brycheiniog* Volume 54 for 2023 will not be launched until 16 May at the Brecknock Society talk by Martin Crampin at Brecon Cathedral. Subscribers get it earlier, proving the worth of a subscription.

As in most years, the lead article comes from the Sir John Lloyd Memorial Lecture that took place (in person again) on 1 April 2022. It was delivered by Dr David Robinson, who spoke on '*A Pretty Castle and a Fair Place*':

The Conservation and Interpretation of Tretower Court and Castle and followed it up with a captivating tour of Tretower Castle and Court the morning after. The article, which is a developed form of the lecture, is both a personal reflection (David wonders what his younger self—who became hooked on the site after an early

visit—would have made of the decoration of the Great Hall, evoking the appearance of a feast given by Sir Roger Vaughan in the late 1460s) and a truly impressive history of the work undertaken at Tretower (both Castle and Court). David does not shy away from controversy, often surrounding the personalities involved and their choices in how the work progressed.

Henry Vaughan is a descendant of the medieval owners of Tretower Court and is well known in the area for his poetry, much of it based on the natural landscape of the Usk valley. But Henry was more than a poet, he was also a medical practitioner, and the next article by botanical artist, Nina Krauzewicz, asks what sort of medicine did Vaughan practice, and did it involve herbs and plants from the same countryside that he so wonderfully immortalised in verse? A particular highlight of the article is the illustrations drawn by Nina of the plants she reveals in the text. They are exquisite and it is no wonder she is a regular exhibitor with the Royal Horticultural Society.

We stay with the medieval period for our next article, albeit a much earlier time, when regular contributor, R. J. Silvester, looks at the development of the Llynfi region before (when evidence is extremely sparse) and after (when records become evident) the Norman Conquest. It is not all 'Pretty Castles' and 'Fair Places'. The author also makes an important point: that we miss an important source of

information if we overlook the time-worn features of the land; in them is written the past.

When I was editing R. J. Silvester's paper, I was sent another by a fellow regular contributor, Robert Gant. He asked if I might be interested in a piece on war-time agriculture in the middle-Usk valley. I immediately saw a nice overlap with the previous piece: both covered local areas and both prioritised landscape as a way of interpreting the past, although Robert used a little-known war-time report. In 1992, *The National Farm Survey 1941-43* was released to public view and, seeing no one locally was utilising the report, Robert decided to take a look at what it records of the middle-Usk valley and what those records can tell us about the social conditions of the time. You probably know some of the places mentioned.

The last article moves us towards the modern era and is a gripping story of how the author, Nigel Clubb, came across a sketchbook by Arthur Pawson (it all started in a pub) and traced his name to Yorkshire, where there is a sole surviving (as far as we know) painting by, what Nigel discovered, was a local man from Ystradgynlais who used his limited but undoubted talent to teach the miners how to draw and paint. The article is wonderfully illustrated with Pawson's own sketches, some of miners working underground.

Our first Note & Query by Sophie

Houlton involves an intriguing puzzle concerning our county's own historian and sometime solicitor Theophilus Jones. Was this upstanding citizen of Brecon above a few tricks of his own? It appears not. Sophie tells the story as a three-act play in which the actors move across the stage with all the polite hostility that defines that era.

Our next Note & Query looks at a vanishingly-rare fungi. It is called hair-ice, which tells you all you need to know about how it looks, although John also has some fine photographs to illustrate his discovery to the far south of our county.

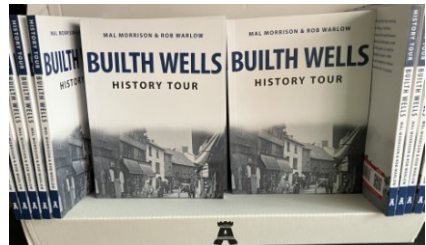
Before book reviews, a letter from Nigel Clubb answers a mystery he posed in the last volume of *Brycheiniog* in his review of Richard Suggett's book: the whereabouts of the St George and Dragon window of "Cillwych". It is actually from... well, that would be telling. You need to read the letter.

Book reviews, as always, round out the volume with no less than four titles relating to Hay.

Mike Williams, Editor of *Brycheiniog*

Builth Wells & District Heritage Society

The Heritage Centre continues to flourish with numerous additions to our collection. Our team of volunteers have been marvellous, and we recently had a social evening for volunteers in the White Horse Hotel.



Our new publication – Builth Wells History Tour is available now from the Heritage Centre and all the usual outlets including Kindle. It is priced at £8.99 and contains some previously unpublished photographs and an easy-to-follow map to guide the reader around our town.

Our next members meeting is on 12th May when we welcome back Dr Mike Williams who will be speaking about

Welsh Druids. Dr Mike is a great friend of Bulth Heritage Society and we look forward to his return. See attached poster.

For the last meeting before the summer break we have Hugh Purcell, whose original visit had to be postponed due to the pandemic. He is due to talk about his book 'Up Top' *Up Top* tells how the mentally ill were treated in the 20th century, focusing on the Mid Wales Mental Hospital, which began life as a lunatic asylum and closed when community care took over 100 years later. It was the only UK hospital for psychotic POWs in World War II, including, briefly, the Deputy Führer Rudolf Hess. This account is based on original archives and oral testimony from staff and patients and is copiously illustrated. The Mid Wales Mental Hospital was representative of most mental institutions. The book places in a wide context life in a lunatic asylum, the treatment of shell shock in two world wars, the short-lived fashion for brain surgery, heavy ECT and deep sleep treatment; then the increasing reliance on drugs and various therapies before the gradual taking over of community care. It will be a great end to the season.

Hay History Group

Hay Castle Event

Friday 19 May 2023, 7pm

The Colourful Past: Edward Bulmer and the English Country House - Cost £10



In his first book, *The Colourful Past: Edward Bulmer and the English Country House*, Bulmer takes readers on an in-depth tour of his work across some of the finest British houses, including Althorp, Goodwood, Pitshill House and Broughton Hall, as well as his own home – a Queen Anne manor house built in the early 18th century. Bulmer will talk through his creative and working processes, describing in detail how he renovated, decorated, and preserved the home, the problems he encountered and the decisions he and his clients made to solve them, all whilst sharing tips and secrets that readers can take away for their own homes.

The talk will begin at 7pm - please come up to the main entrance on the lawns and up the drive form Oxford Road. The Honesty Bookshop door on Castle Street will be closed

Thursday 25 May to Sunday 4 June



Have a look at the website for all the wonderful events going on at Hay Festival

The Mortimer History Society

Saturday 20th May 2023

The MHS Spring Conference – Marriage, Sex, and dynasty building Ludlow Assembly Rooms. For details see the conference page 📄📄

Wednesday 21st June 2023

The John Grove Memorial Lecture – Dr David Stephenson, 'Conflict, acculturation, and integration in the medieval March of Wales' Powis Castle Ballroom. For details see the conference page
There will be an opportunity to listen to an introductory talk on Powis Castle followed by free flow access to the castle rooms prior to the Lecture.

National Library of Wales

Friday 12th May 2023

The Wales Map Symposium 2023

The National Library of Wales,
Ceredigion, SY23 3BU

|
Mapping the Nation
Cost: £25

This year's symposium will be exploring the work of the Ordnance Survey, how approaches to mapping the landscape have changed over time, and how historical OS maps can help us to understand our physical environment both past and present.

PROGRAMME

10.15: 'Excavating' the Map: Landscapes of the Early Ordnance Survey in Great Britain and Ireland – Keith Lilley, Professor of Historical Geography, Queen's University Belfast.

11.00: The Blue & Black MS Drawings for the 1:2500 – Dr Rob Wheeler, Honorary Secretary, Charles Close Society.

11.45: Mapping the milestones in Ordnance Survey's history – Jess Baker, Technical Relationship Consultant, Ordnance Survey.

14.00: The Meresmen and the Parish Boundaries of Wales – Scott Lloyd, Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Wales.

14.45: Not just maps of Wales: OS mapping at the National Library –

Huw Thomas, Map Curator, The National Library of Wales.

15.45: Wales on the Map – Mike Parker.

This event will be hosted by the National Library of Wales in partnership with the Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Wales and the Charles Close Society.

Tickets for the in-person event will include a buffet lunch.

This event is through the medium of English.

The Radnorshire Society

Friday 26th May –at Dolau Community Centre LD1 5TL 7pm Bill Britnell on Radnorshire’s Lost Church – excavating Capel Maelog near Llandrindod 7pm. Bill oversaw this excavation in the 1980s which resulted in finding amongst other things the long lost church of Capel Maelog near Llandrindod

23rd June –at 7pm in Painscastle Village Hall LD2 3JL. Mari fforde “Hay castle, history and its restoration”.

Saturday 15th July –from 11am to 6pm – An Exhibition of local scrapbooks, diaries and pictures and booksale. To include the scrapbooks of Ruth Jones and other local people. Refreshments. Penybont Community Centre

It may be that some details will change, but it will be on our website and our facebook page.

y Gaer – Brecon Library & Brecknock Museum

Saturday Morning Talks at y Gaer

Saturday 20 May Angling and fishing. A case in the Brecon gallery displaying a fine collection of tied flies, rods and reels, together with poachers’ tools of the trade, was the inspiration behind the talk, to be given by Paul Ashton with assistance from Taff Williams.

Saturday **10th June**, William Gibbs will give us a tour of the portrait paintings and busts in the Courtroom, an opportunity to find out about the great and good gentlemen whose likenesses are displayed there and the artists who portrayed them.

We are seeking new speakers for the monthly talks, particularly from around the county, not just Brecon town. Talks are generally on the second Saturday of the month at 11:30am, and the format is straightforward:- a 20 minute talk on a topic linked to the collections at y Gaer, whether on display or in the archives, with audience questions at the end.

We organise the venue, advertising and any technical requirements and can help with creating slides and presentations. We have linked up with

Brecon Story, who record the talks, with the speaker's permission of course, and make them available on the Brecon Story website and at y Gaer. So, if you or your society have done some research into local history, perhaps a local railway or canal, an archaeological discovery, an industry, a craft or a character, that you think deserves a wider audience, please contact us on libbyrees@gmail.com. We'd love to hear from you!

Beryl Gibson and Libby Rees
Brecknock Society and Museum
Friends