

Cymdeithas Brycheiniog a Chyfeillion yr Amgueddfa

Brecknock Society and Museum Friends

(Charity Number 518041)

Newsletter January 2015

From the Chairman, John Gibbs (01874 730747 or gibbs@keme.co.uk)

Brecknock Museum / Art Gallery and Brecon Library Project - 'Brecon Cultural Hub'

Dr Mervyn Bramley, represents the Society on the Project Board that Powys CC has set up to oversee the management of the project. There is now also a wider Stakeholder Group on which many local Societies and organisations are represented and which is also attended by a number of county councillors. I attend this group on behalf of the BS&MF. Since the planning application for the Hub was submitted, there has been much positive interaction between the PCC Project team and the National Park. We understand that the application should come before the BBNPA Planning Committee in early March.

Members will be interested to know that all the Museum and Art Gallery collections have been moved across the road to Watton Mount. The process was conducted in a very thorough and efficient way. The work of cataloguing is continuing, much of it being done by the team of volunteers. A donation from the Society of £50 towards refreshments for visitors has been much appreciated.

Review of *Brycheiniog*.

As members of the Society will know, three Council members, Nigel Clubb, Elizabeth Siberry and myself, have been carrying out a review of our Journal to ensure that it meets the needs of today. I would like to express grateful thanks to all members who contributed in one way or another to this process.

Our draft report was recently considered at a full Council meeting and approved, with a few small additions. The Society remains committed to producing a printed publication but at the same time we are very conscious of the importance of our agreement with the National Library in Aberystwyth by which, after 5 years, each volume should be accessible via the internet. As of now the volumes for the years 2004 -9 have not been digitized and we will be following up this matter with the Library shortly. Volume XLVI, due out in March, will retain many familiar features. However there will be some new elements – for example a review of the year by the Chairman to complement the review by the Curator of the Museum.

I stepped in to take the role of Acting Editor at this time last year and while I have found it to be a fascinating and rewarding task, I and the rest of the Council wish to see a new Editor appointed soon. If anyone reading this Newsletter would like more details of the position, do please let me know (my contact details are above). Copies of the review document itself will soon be ready for circulation. If you would like to see it, please let me know.

Recent Meeting

On January 13th, our president, Ken Jones, gave us a fascinating account of the voyages of Captain John Lloyd (1748-1818) in the service of the East India Company. We very much hope that, next year, he will give us 'part 2' of the talk, this on John Lloyd's political, economic and social life in Breconshire after he gave up the sea in 1796.

Forthcoming Meetings

Tuesday February 17th 2015 'Unravelling Brecon's Woollen Industry'. This will be an illustrated talk by Sue Hiley Harris at 3.00 pm in Brecon Guildhall. Sue is searching for woollen blankets made in Breconshire. If you can help at all please contact her (Tel. 01874 610892 or email sue@suehileyharris.co.uk)

Friday March 20th The 18th Sir John Lloyd Lecture. *The Battle of Agincourt and its Breconshire Connections.* We are very excited that Professor Anne Curry, the recognised international authority, will give the lecture this year. As many of you will already be aware, she will tell us about her research on the army which Henry V led to France, including men from the Brecon area, and which achieved such an amazing victory at the battle of Agincourt on 25 October 1415. She will also share her thoughts on why Agincourt has come to mean so much to so many. Is it simply all down to Shakespeare?

As in recent years, tickets are free (disregard the reference in the Theatr brochure to a 50p admin charge for each ticket) but they must be booked. Please make contact with the box office at Theatr Brycheiniog (Tel 01874 611622 or www.theatrbrycheiniog.co.uk) as soon as possible to secure your seat. Unless you call in person or send a stamped addressed envelope, the tickets will be held for collection on or before the night. If having made a booking, you find that you cannot come, do please contact the Box Office to release the seat so that it can be taken by someone else.

Hilary Scott-Archer has made arrangements for a post-lecture dinner (price £15.00 for main course and pudding) in Tipple and Tiffin, the theatre's restaurant. If you are interested in joining us, please contact Tipple and Tiffin (Tel 01874 611866 or email info@tipplentiffin.co.uk) after reserving your seat.

As part of the varied programme of events in our area to commemorate the battle, Anne Curry will formally open an exhibition on the Agincourt theme in the gallery of the theatre at 11.00am on Saturday March 21st. This exhibition will continue until April 11th, before going on tour to other places in Wales with associations with the battle.

Monday March 23rd *The Annual General Meeting of The Society* 2.30 pm at 'The Muse' The Old Museum, Glamorgan Street. An invitation to this meeting is enclosed (see the reverse of page 3 of this letter). Nearer the time we will send out a more complete agenda and the Society's programme for next year. Do come along to learn more about what is going on in the Society and to hear something about 'The Muse' and its history. It was the home of the Brecknock museum from 1928 until 1974 and we hope that some members of the Society will tell us about their recollection of the building and the museum in those days.

Saturday May 16 *Medieval Breconshire and the Welsh Poets* 10am – 4.00pm Brecon Cathedral and Christ College. With this letter we are including a flier for a special one day conference that BS&MF is holding in conjunction with The Centre for Advanced Welsh and Celtic Studies (CAWCS) and the University of Swansea. This event follows an email I received back in September from Ann Parry Owen of CAWCS, which is a dedicated research institute of the University of Wales, located alongside the National Library of Wales in Aberystwyth. From time to time the Centre seeks partners in different parts of Wales for a field meeting and she was wondering if we would be interested in just such a collaboration.

Please note that there will be a registration fee for the conference which will include a finger buffet lunch at Christ College. Two of the papers will be delivered in Welsh and for these there will be a professional simultaneous translation for which earphones will be provided.

As a bonus there will be a paper in the next issue of Brycheiniog by one of the speakers, Cynfael Lake, 'The fifteenth Century poet Hywel Dafi and his connection with Breconshire.'

The Society welcomes this opportunity to collaborate with CAWCS which is involved in a range of interesting research projects and, with this conference, offers insights into a less well-known aspect of Brecknock's history and literature.

The Brinoer Tramroad Project

This tram-road was used to bring coal, iron and limestone from the industrial areas of north Monmouthshire and south-east Breconshire down to the Monmouthshire and Brecon Canal at Talybont. John Jones of Aber, who has long taken a special interest in the tram-road, has assembled a quantity of historic documents relating to its operation and the Council recently made a grant towards the costs of cataloguing and archiving this material. The work is being done by a young graduate Thomas Davies of Abertillery and we hope that John and Thomas will combine to give us a talk about the tramroad and its operation later this year.

'Breconshire from above'

Last year's Sir John Lloyd Lecture by Toby Driver entitled '*The archaeology and history of Breconshire from the air*' aroused much interest and it is with pleasure that we can announce progress on a publication based on aerial photographs of Brecknock produced in collaboration between this Society, The Royal Commission on Ancient and Historic Monuments in Wales and the Clwyd Powys Archaeological Trust. I expect to be able to announce full details on the availability of this book in my August newsletter.

Celebrating Henry Vaughan

The various stages of the Grave Restoration and Access Project are well described and illustrated on our website <http://www.brecknocksociety.co.uk/henry-vaughan.html>. Llansantffraed PCC and our Society are progressing plans for a 'Vaughan Visitor Area' in the NW corner at the rear of the church opposite the main entrance. Work is also progressing well on a book *Henry Vaughan and the Usk Valley* which will contain background articles, a selection of poems and some complementary illustrations. The work involves coordination between our Society, The Brecknock Arts Trust, The Vaughan Association and Llansantffraed Church. Looking ahead, the Henry Vaughan Memorial Evensong will be held at Llansantffraed Church at 3.00pm on Sunday 26 April 2015. The event will include a short address by Helen Wilcox, Professor of English Literature at Bangor University, as well as the wreath laying at the restored grave. Refreshments will be served afterwards.



Appeal for the Purchase of Colt Hoare watercolour

Sir Richard Colt Hoare who owned the great estate of Stourhead in Wiltshire, was described by John Constable as 'no inconsiderable artist'. He was a regular visitor to this area and provided illustrations for Theophilus Jones' *History of Breconshire*. His delicately tinted 'A North West View of Brecknock in South Wales, Church of St Mary's 1st of June 1793' is available for purchase for the Museum & Art Gallery at £2250. The Brecknock Art Trust has announced that it will match all individual contributions and Council has recently commended this appeal. £170 was raised at the October meeting of the BS&MF in Crickhowell. Please send cheques, made payable to 'The Brecknock Art Trust' to William Gibbs, The Barn, Cyffredyn Lane, Llangynidr NP8 1LR.

Keeping in contact

Do please join our email list if you have not done so (not only can it be a helpful reminder of a particular event but it allows us to inform you of new developments and enforced changes of plan). Please contact our Membership Secretary Elizabeth Siberry (elizabeth.siberry@gmail.com). If you think that you are on the list but have not received a mailing recently, please let Elizabeth know. Emails can sometime bounce back or errors creep into multiple listings and we are keen to keep the list as up to date as possible. Also, please consult the Web-site from time to time.



John Gibbs

Website: <http://www.brecknocksociety.co.uk/society.htm>