

Cymdeithas Brycheiniog a Chyfeillion yr Amgueddfa
Brecknock Society and Museum Friends
(Charity Number 518041)
Newsletter June 2016

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

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

By now most of you will have heard the excellent news that the redevelopment work is to go ahead. In the Brecon & Radnor article of June 1, Powys County Councillor Graham Brown said 'This decision re-affirms the Council's commitment to this exciting project which will provide a huge boost to Brecon and the surrounding area'. He continued by thanking the Heritage Lottery Fund, as major funder, as well as the Brecknock Society & Museum Friends, the Brecknock Art Trust, the Armed Forces Community Covenant and other trusts and individuals who have contributed additional funding - 'Their support as committed partners in the project is second to none'

The Society's representative on the Progress Team, Dr Mervyn Bramley, who has played a key role in keeping things moving forward during the trials and tribulations of recent years, has said 'We are delighted that the Council has re-affirmed its commitment and the project budget is now secured. The whole Breconshire Community stands to benefit from this 21st century facility, which will also be a major attraction for visitors, particularly on bad weather days as these are not infrequent in mid-Wales! The existing museum and art collections are of national significance and an important record of our Breconshire heritage - at last these will be on public display again.'

For myself, I would like to pay tribute to Mervyn and also to the many other Council members of the BS&MF who have worked for the success of this project over so many years.

Discussions are in progress over arrangements for a celebratory event in Brecon within the next few weeks. We will alert members who receive our email communications as soon as we have more information. (If you use email but are not yet on our list, perhaps now is the time to join - please contact Elizabeth Siberry our Membership Secretary elizabeth.siberry@gmail.com)

Donations from the Membership towards the Museum & Art Gallery Redevelopment.

At the Extraordinary General Meeting last December the idea was raised for an appeal to the membership. It was agreed then that such an appeal would best be made once the core funding for the project had been established; the idea being that we could request support for important items not covered in the basic budget. Although the core funding is now in place, very recent discussions with the senior curator Nigel Blackmore has made it clear that it would be best to wait for the dust to settle a bit (literally?) before proceeding in this respect. So watch this space!

Of course if you would like to make a donation to the project without it being tied to specific items, do please get in contact with me (If you are a UK tax payer, you will be able to gift-aid your donation and we will be happy to help over this).

Also if you have contacts with any Charitable Trusts or other sources of funding, do please make some enquiries of their possible interest in our work.

An Exhibition to visit now

Do try and visit *Lady Llanover and her Circle* in Abergavenny Museum which runs until September 4th. It features two pieces lent by Brecknock Museum and especially conserved for this exhibition: *The Death of Tewdric* by John Evan Thomas and the bust of Thomas himself by his brother William Meredyth Thomas.

The Vernacular Buildings of Breconshire

At Richard Suggett's Sir John Lloyd lecture to a full house in Theatre Brycheiniog last March, we raised the idea of developing an interest group, under the auspices of the Society, the members of which would seek to learn more about the houses of Breconshire through informal meetings and house visits. Two meetings have already been arranged. One is on the afternoon of Sunday June 26th at Aberyail, Llangynidr. The second - a more substantial event - will take place on the morning of Saturday October 1st at Penpont, 6 miles west of Brecon on the A40. This will be part of a two day festival - 'Penpont - past, present, and future'. There will be several talks, at least one about the history and features of Penpont itself, and during the weekend there will be opportunities for tours of the house and grounds. Richard Suggett will also be with us on the Saturday

morning, on this occasion talking about other gentry houses in Breconshire. There will be a pre-registration process for the morning's conference with a registration charge: this to ensure that people coming from a distance are guaranteed a seat. Please contact me if you would like to attend and are not already on the mailing list for the interest group. More information will be on the Society web-site.

Henry Vaughan

Our project on the poet has gone from strength to strength. The book '*Henry Vaughan and the Usk Valley*' (published by Logaston Press) was launched in April and is selling well. Three of those very much involved with its production, including Elizabeth Siberry who wrote the chapter on the Vaughan heritage and acted as one of the two editors, gave talks at this year's Hay Festival. These were well received by an appreciative audience in a full 'Cube' tent. We should wish to record the very real achievement that has resulted in this book moving from an initial concept note to a presentation at Hay within just 2 years!

Henry Vaughan and Samuel Taylor Coleridge

Two years ago we learnt that there was to be a travelling festival this summer to mark the journey that the young Coleridge made through Wales in 1794. The Director, Richard Parry, wished to arrange for interactions with local people celebrating imagination, creativity, landscape and community. Following an approach from Mervyn Bramley, Richard participated in the morning service at Llansantffraid Church on Sunday May 29. The service included readings from Coleridge and Vaughan and the address on the theme of poetry and belief was given by a mentor of Richard's, The Rev Professor John Rogerson. Afterwards there was a programme of music and poetry and an opportunity to learn more about Coleridge and the Festival. Richard will be bringing his travels to conclusion at the National Eisteddfod in Abergavenny at the beginning of August.

The Society's main event for the Coleridge in Wales Festival is the 'Swan of the Usk' concert at Llansantffraed Church on Saturday 18 June, which it has organised jointly with The Unicorn Singers. At the time of writing this newsletter, all 100 tickets had been sold with those attending looking forward to an interesting evening of music, song and poetry in homage to two great poets - Coleridge and Vaughan.

Saturday July 16 Noon onwards Visit to Llanwrtyed

Meet between 12 and 12.30 at the new Llanwrtyed & District Heritage and Arts Centre, created from the former Congregational chapel: display panels tell many stories about the history of the area. Tea and coffee will be provided to go with a packed lunch (alternatively the local "Cafe Sospan" is good). At 1.00 pm there will be a short introduction to the Centre followed by a guided walk round the village. At 3.00 pm car-share for the short drive to visit to the old Llanwrtyed parish church. If you would like a lift to Llanwrtyed or to offer space in a car please contact Elaine Starling (01874 711484 or evstarling@lineone.net). There is some parking in neighbouring roads and are several car parks in the village (maps available from Elaine)

Thursday July 21 6.30 pm Wales Book of the Year event at the Redhouse Merthyr Tydfil

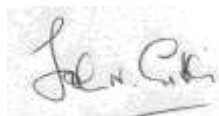
The shortlist for the 2016 Roland Mathias Prize for poetry in English, which is sponsored by the BS&MF, includes 'Boy Running' (*Seren*) by the Breconshire poet, Paul Henry. The event begins with a drinks reception. Tickets are £5 from Literature Wales on 02920472266.

In the autumn, Glyn Mathias will be arranging for a local event with the winner of the prize.

Friday Sept 9 7.00 pm The Studio, Theatr Brycheiniog Breconshire Traditions, Myths and Legends

To start Brecknock History Week (Sept 9 – 18), the BS&MF is hosting an event to which all the component Societies of the Brecknock History Forum are invited. These societies will be providing displays and in addition there will be series of oral presentations. These will include myths of Rorke's drift, the Llangynidr Ghost story and an account the Boughrood Dead House. Light refreshments will be available.

A free leaflet detailing all the events of Brecknock History Week will be available from shops, libraries etc across Breconshire from the middle of August,



John Gibbs