

Cymdeithas Brycheiniog a Chyfeillion yr Amgueddfa
Brecknock Society and Museum Friends
(Charity Number 518041)
Newsletter August 2018

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

'y Gaer' Brecknock Museum & Art Gallery and Brecon Library

Progress update A great deal of progress has been made on y Gaer since my January newsletter, however I must report that there has been some slippage over the planned date for the soft opening in late December 2018. The contractors Kier were due to hand over the completed building complex to Powys County Council as lead partner at the end of August 2018. The handover will now be at least a month late due to delays in completing several critical items, including the museum lift, car park drainage and some internal finishes (e.g. flooring and paintwork). Handover to Powys CC is followed by fit out of the exhibits, books, furnishings and equipment and by the external landscaping prior to soft opening. Powys CC will shortly announce a new soft opening date, which will probably be in February 2019.

I would like to pay tribute to the efforts of those Powys CC staff with whom we work most closely: Lucy Bevan (Project Manager), Nigel Blackmore (Senior Curator) and Nichola Farr (Senior Librarian, Brecon).

Fundraising appeal £113,500 has now been raised towards the appeal for £121,700 launched by the Society and our local partner the Brecknock Art Trust in 2017 under the broad headings of 'Conservation, Display and Interpretation'. Many people with a love of Breconshire - including many of you - and various local and family Trusts, have supported the Conservation and Display project. It has raised £63,500 and almost all the sorely-needed conservation work on our target list of exhibits has either been carried out or is now in hand.

The 'Display' element includes some special cabinet drawers to enable some of the important collection of water colours to be both permanently available for visitors to view and yet protected from the damaging effects of light while not being viewed. The Colwinston Trust generously granted £20K towards this venture.

The 'Interpretation' project is aimed at providing 'in depth' information on the displays in the Museum and Art Gallery through the use of small 'tablet' computer terminals distributed throughout the galleries. It has been made possible by a £50,000 grant to the Society for the tablets and associated software from the Garfield Weston Foundation. These funds are being administered by the Society as a charity and this has entailed lengthy discussion with Powys staff and DesignMap, the specialist consultants responsible for the internal 'fit-out' of the Museum and Art Gallery. We are now close to awarding the contract for the supply of the tablet terminals and software to a firm specialising in this flexible way of providing information on gallery exhibits. The tablets will give visitors access to facts, stories, pictures and sound recordings that will add to the interest of the exhibits themselves and make links with the locations across Breconshire from which they come.

Volunteer support needed Our next task in the Interpretation project, working with these specialist firms and our colleagues in the Museum and Art Gallery, is to develop a team of Breconshire volunteers who will draw together information on the 100 plus exhibits that will be covered by the tablet terminals. The aim will be to provide basic information for these exhibits on the tablet terminals in time for the 2019 soft opening and to build up further 'in depth' information over the duration of the Interpretation project, which ends in March 2020. Is this something with which you would like to help? Much of the work can be done from home and we will train any volunteers. Please get in touch with Mervyn Bramley (mervyn.bramley@icloud.com or 01874 665267). Separately, we are also appealing with Powys CC for volunteers to welcome visitors to y Gaer and to be on hand to help them make the most of their visit. For this, please get in touch with Mervyn or me for a form.

The 'Pop-up' y Gaer display.

The Society is member of the Brecknock History Forum which exists to link organisations interested in local history and culture across the former county of Breconshire. A few months ago it was resolved that the Forum should produce a display to promote y Gaer at shows and other events over the summer and autumn. The display, comprising three pop-up panels (Library, Museum, Art Gallery) and a pop-up table was produced in early June and is supported by a leaflet designed and printed by Powys. To engage interest there are two large scale jig-saws based on works in the Art Gallery and a very professional badge-making kit. So far the display has been featured in events at Ystradgynlais and Brecon Cathedral and at the Cwm Du and Brecon shows.

If you would like to help at an event (or have ideas for an event where the display could be shown) please contact Ann Reese (07760 382447 or a.reese@btinternet.com)

Victor Jones History Prize.

As many of you will know, this annual junior school prize owes its origin to a donation to the Society by Dr Evan Jones of Bristol University in memory of his grandfather, Mr Victor Jones, who was a very well-known Breconshire teacher and local historian (and father to our highly-respected former President Ken Jones). As far as the Society is concerned we are well aware of the number of children for whom entering the competition has been an important early step on the way to a successful university career and beyond. In addition, the giving out of the prizes is a much-valued 'curtain-raiser' to the Sir John Lloyd Lecture.

For the last few years we have been very much indebted to Martine Woodcock, Education and Access Officer at the Brecknock Museum, for masterminding the project, making the contacts with the primary schools etc. However, with the opening of y Gaer and some associated changes in Martine's responsibilities, she feels that she must reduce her involvement in this activity. I am very pleased to say that BS&MF council member, Jan Bailey, has generously offered to step into the role of co-ordinator. For the coming year the process of encouraging children to participate will be essentially as before but with some new initiatives. Firstly, we will explore partnerships in the promotion of the project with some of the local history societies across Breconshire. Secondly, we will use this Newsletter, as I am doing now, to enquire if any of you have links with a primary school, either through your own connections (family or otherwise) or through a knowledge of people who may be governors, which could be used to encourage its participation. If you feel that you can help over this or with the Prize in any other way, do get in touch with me or with Jan Bailey (01874 638345 or janet.bailey3@btinternet.com), if possible by the end of September.

Developing a Brecon Heritage & Cultural Network.

This is an initiative to provide a better linkage between all the bodies interested in the heritage and culture of the Brecon area. It is led by the Cathedral. An application for funding was submitted in June and the result should be known in early September.

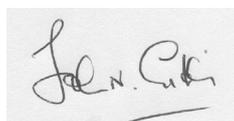
Forthcoming meetings of the Society

With this Newsletter you should receive notification of the programme of the Brecknock History Festival which covers the period September to October and which has, as its general theme, the people of Breconshire. From our own programme, may I make reference to the study day '*Notables of Llangammarch*' that we are holding in conjunction with the Llangammarch Wells History Society on Saturday 22nd September from 11.30am to 4.00pm. It promises to be a fascinating occasion. In addition to some very varied talks, copies of the various editions of Theophilus Jones' History of Breconshire will be available for you to peruse. If you would like to reserve a place, please contact Elaine Starling (evstarling@lineone.net 01874 711484)

The Roland Mathias Prize poetry evening. This will be held on Friday October 5th at 7 pm at The Muse, Glamorgan Street, Brecon. Our guest will be Robert Minhinnick who has won the 2018 Prize for 'Diary of the Last Man'. He is a well-known environmentalist and will be reading from and talking about his work.

Some of the 'back-stories' of items in the Museum and Art Gallery will be featured in the November 30th meeting of the Society on '*The Interpretation of the Brecknock Museum's Collections: how the stories are being told*'. This will be at The Muse, Glamorgan Street, Brecon - 7.00 pm. Refreshments will be offered.

Buildings of Breconshire Group. Quite a number of you have participated in meetings of the Buildings of Breconshire Group. After a rather long quiet period, I am pleased to say that we have arranged a field-day on Saturday October 13th. Precise details have yet to be worked out but it will involve a morning visit to Trebarried by kind invitation of Kenny and Helen Campbell, and an afternoon visit to at least one local 'long house'. Trebarried, a fine house built in mid 17th C by a member of the Vaughan family, is near Llandefalle and about 7 miles north-east of Brecon. Please email me if you would like to attend or know more about the event.



John Gibbs