

THE TRANSACTIONS
OF THE
RADNORSHIRE SOCIETY

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Edited by Professor Peter J Conradi and Ms Daphne Turner.

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THE RADNORSHIRE SOCIETY

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THE EIGHTIETH ANNUAL REPORT

THE PRESIDENT'S ADDRESS

IT IS WITH PLEASURE mixed with sadness that as President of the Radnorshire Society I welcome members to our Annual General Meeting.

During the past year, we have lost two very distinguished members of the Society: the Revd Griff Rees and the Revd Dr Roy Fenn. As a measure of our respect for them and any other members who may have passed away, may I ask you to stand in silence for a few moments.

Thank you.

The Revd Griff Rees was a very long-term member of the Executive Committee and a stalwart in the business of the Radnorshire Society. The Revd Dr Roy Fenn was President of the Radnorshire Society for six years and Editor of the *Transactions* over many years. He wrote articles in the *Transactions* with Jim Sinclair. His son, Adam, took over the joint Editorship from his father, and Professor Conradi is our Editor now. The Revd Dr Roy was widely known in the Principality. There was a very good representation of Society members at both funerals. I feel that there are friends and colleagues here today who would be able to pay finer tributes to these two members of the Society, as you would have personal recollections of time spent in their company.

I think I can safely say that the highlight of our year is the publication of the translation of Ffrancis Payne's book, *Crwydro Sir Faesyfed*, as *Exploring Radnorshire*, which was undertaken by Mr Dai Hawkins. The first part of the book has already been published in the *Transactions* (Volume 78) and was handed out earlier this year. The second part is coming out today as Volume 79. The Society is indebted to Dai Hawkins for, firstly, receiving the permission of Ffrancis Payne's two sons, one of whom lives in the USA, and, secondly, undertaking the considerable work involved. I understand that permission has been given for publication only in the *Radnorshire Transactions*, so we are very honoured.

During this year, we have had very successful lectures in Village Halls with a lot of local support.

The Field Section had done some very good work with Ann Goodwin at the helm, and the Excursions have been led with great enthusiasm by Norma Baird-Murray. We look forward to hearing their reports later on.

Your Executive Committee has met four times during the year, with the President having a memory lapse over the one which was ably led by Alwyn Batley. My grateful thanks to Alwyn. Your Executive Committee

has great strength in depth and I am still very much like a new boy feeling his way. I am grateful for the help and support of the Executive officers and of members who keep the business of the Society rolling on.

But there is none that I am more grateful to than our valiant Secretary, Mrs Sadie Cole, who keeps us all in good order with her cheerful demeanour. Please join me in a round of applause. Thank you, Sadie.

Let us now get on with the main business of the meeting: to receive reports and elect an Executive and appoint officers.

THE SECRETARY'S REPORT

I have pleasure in reporting that the last year has been a very successful one for the Society in spite of the sad death of two of our most notable members: the Revd Dr RWD Fenn, ex-President and Hon. Editor of the *Transactions* for many years, and the Revd G Rees, a Vice-President and loyal member of the Executive Committee. They will long be remembered for their contributions to the Society.

The work of the Society has continued with the four well-attended Executive Committee meetings dealing with the business of the Society. Enquiries on a wide range of subjects continue to increase from year to year, many of them received electronically, family and local history forming the majority of enquiries. All enquiries are answered to the best of our abilities, either directly or by referral to other sources.

It has been an exciting year, with the publication of the translation of *Exploring Radnorshire*, which has received praise from a wide number of sources, including the National Library of Wales.

There have been the usual public lectures, all of which were very well attended. Last year's AGM heard Marion Loffler give a fascinating talk on 'Iolo Morganwg in Radnorshire'. In April Dr Colin Hughes spoke in New Radnor to a large audience on 'Cattle Drovers in Radnorshire', illustrated by a large number of projected images. Later that month Bronwyn Curnow spoke at the Offa's Dyke Centre in Knighton on 'Reporting the building of the Elan Valley Dams', with accounts taken from contemporary newspapers and reports. As a change from the usual lecture timetable David Evans showed extensive slides illustrating the work of PB Abery of Builth. This lecture at Llandewi was held in October and was very well attended. It was agreed that a move to the autumn for at least one of the lectures should be considered.

Mr Richard Hayman will speak following the AGM about 'An Archaeological Survey of Carneddau'.

The Society continues to maintain its connections with Powys Archives and the Radnorshire Museum as well as Clwyd/Powys Archaeological Trust, which all have ex-officio members on the Executive Committee.

Two excursions were organised as usual by our Excursion Officers. A visit to Brampton Bryan was a unique privilege for the Society and was very well supported. In June a visit to Llangollen was organised. The Field Section continues to thrive, with increased membership.

I attended the AGM of CPAT at Welshpool on behalf of the Society and relations between our two organisations are a valuable asset to the Society.

It has been a very busy year with the publication of two volumes of the *Transactions*, and the interest generated by Dai Hawkins's translation of the work of Ffrancis Payne has attracted many new members to the Society. This has involved more work than I usually have but in the interests of the Society it has been a labour of love.

It has been particularly necessary this year to maintain a close working relationship with all officers, and their valuable help and advice is appreciated. The amount of work involved in running the Society seems to increase year by year and this is reflected in the increased membership and raised profile of the Society.

The support of Mr Alwyn Batley and Mrs Anne Goodwin has been a tremendous help. It must be added that without the help and support of all officers the burden of work would have been greater, and my sincere thanks are due to them all.

This has indeed been a landmark year for the Society and a fitting way to mark the eightieth anniversary of its foundation, and it has been a privilege to be play some part in it.

Sadie Cole
Hon. Secretary

THE EDITORS' REPORT

During roughly the past calendar year the Editors contrived the feat of bringing out no fewer than three different *TRSs*: 2007, 2008 and 2009, and we have thus also brought the *Transactions* 'up to speed' or, as they say, 'in sync'. This very hard but worthwhile work would not have been possible without the help of the new co-editor, Daphne Turner.

The Editors are pleased that Mr Dai Hawkins is the first person to have been awarded the new RWD Fenn prize of £250 for his long hard work translating Ffrancis Payne's *Crwydro Sir Faesyfed* (Exploring Radnorshire)

into English, within the two volumes *TRS 2008* and *TRS 2009*: many congratulations to him. It is to be celebrated that Radnorians have been given access to this important work on their county and its history. With *TRS 2010*, after this excursus into Payne's Radnorshire, we now revert to our usual format of an antiquarian periodical, with shorter articles of local historical and literary interest. The Payne connexion continues by dint of the translation by Ffransis Payne's son Ifan of 'Nurse Bull' and 'Itinerant Players'. Although Meic Stephens published his own translation, 'Strolling Players', in his *Illuminations: an anthology of Welsh short prose* in 1998, the Editors none the less wanted to make both Payne's articles – to whose Welsh originals Professor Marged Haycock referred in *TRS 2004* – easily available to current *TRS* readers and are grateful to Ifan and Ceri Payne for making this possible. These two articles are, it is true, concerned with Kington over the border in Herefordshire, but since many Radnorians local to Kington have been educated over the years at the Lady Hawkins School and since Payne is an important Radnorshire author, this justifies their inclusion.

We would also point out that the inclusion of Clive Barrett's article on the history of football in Llandrindod Wells represents a widening of focus that we for our part welcome, and hope that others will feel the same.

In order to keep 'up to speed' rather than having every volume separately indexed, which has been one source of delay in the past, the Editors propose reverting to a cumulative index every five or so years instead.

NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

Clive Barrett was born in Presteigne and, after working for the Civil Service and Local Government in Birmingham and Hereford, returned to work for Powys County Council in Llandrindod Wells. His wife's grandfather, Alfred Rogers, a well known local water diviner, found the boat at Castell Collen which led to the founding of the Radnorshire Society in 1930. He played football at junior level until injury stopped his career. He reported on Radnorshire club football for twenty-five years, wrote profiles of sportsmen for the *Mid Wales Journal*, and in 1983 with Rex Davies published a book on the Llandrindod Wells football club on which this article is based.

Bronwyn Curnow moved to Powys in 1984 from London and has worked in a variety of situations: for eighteen months with the Radnorshire Wildlife Trust, fund raising for the restoration of the Gilfach Farm long house near Rhayader; later for Menter Powys, a European-funded community development programme which concentrated on local community empowerment and local tourist development such as themed

church trails around the county. She took her degree as a distance-learning student with Exeter University and was their first distance-learning student to be awarded a degree. She is now the Superintendent Registrar and Registration Service Manager for Powys County Council. She is also a Reader in the Church in Wales. She has two children: a daughter studying Law at Cardiff University and a son completing a Master's degree in Software Engineering at Swansea.

ED EVANS, until his retirement, was the head of the History Department at South Glamorgan College of Education, and part-time tutor in the Open University. He is the author of *The History of Wales, 1660–1815*, published by the University of Wales Press, and of numerous articles in county historical journals.

Colin PF Hughes is a graduate of Aberystwyth and Swansea universities. He was the long-serving Head of History and Humanities at Builth Wells High School. He also worked in the Education Department of Aberystwyth University. His specialism is the history of education, but he has also researched the cattle drovers in Radnorshire and the Rebecca Riots in Radnorshire. He was treasurer of the Radnorshire Society in the 1990s. He is currently a Chief Examiner for GCSE History with the Welsh Examination Board, the WJEC.

Julian Jones has been interested in wildlife since he was a small boy growing up in Gloucestershire; when he was 17, he joined and began volunteering for the local Wildlife Trust. After gaining a degree in Environmental Biology at Aberystwyth University, he trained as a teacher and taught Biology in rural Ghana. He returned to the UK and worked in a variety of nature conservation jobs. After working as Assistant Site Manager for English Nature in North Wiltshire and as a Ranger for the Lee Valley Park, he began working for the Wildlife Trusts in Powys in 1997. He gained a MSc in Environmental Management from Birkbeck College, and is also a Chartered Environmentalist and a Member of the Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management. He is an enthusiast for the natural history of Radnorshire and the history of its people and places.

Frances Jones-Davies is editor of *Cambria*, the national magazine of Wales. Born in Khartoum, schooled in England and Belgium, she finds moving is second nature. She worked for many years as a personal assistant to the chairman of one of the world's largest advertising and public relations consultancies. While living in London she met and married Henry Jones-Davies, founder of *Cambria*. They lived in Turkey

for several years, where she became deeply interested in Mediterranean and middle-eastern cuisine. Nearly twenty years ago they returned to live in Wales in her husband's childhood home. They now have three sons. She writes mainly about food but also on art, gardens, houses and travel.

Anna Page is a former Assistant County Archivist for Powys. She now works as a Consultant Archivist, cataloguing private collections.

Ifan Payne was born in Rhiwbina, Cardiff, and trained as architect at the Welsh School of architecture. He received his PhD in architectural psychology from the University of London and has worked as an architect, lecturer, and project manager in the UK, continental Europe and the United States. He has held the post of Head of Department and Professor of Environmental Design at Kansas State University.

Dr Payne is a prolific writer; professional papers have covered a wide field, from architecture and environmental psychology to telescope enclosure design and the imaging of geosynchronous satellites. He has written well over a thousand articles on music and performance criticism which have been published in both the UK and the USA. Fluent in Welsh and German, as well as English, Dr Payne has had a lifelong interest in translating poetry into English from Welsh, German and Spanish, as well as from English into Welsh. His translations from the Spanish of five love poems by Gustavo Adolfo Béquer were set to music by composer Alun Hoddinott and to date these songs have been performed in concerts around the world more than fifty times. Dr Payne is currently Director of the Magdalena Ridge Observatory in New Mexico, USA.

Michael Readhead lives in Hampshire and has had articles published about two eighteenth-century houses and about the manufacture of delftware in seventeenth-century London. His interest in the Commonwealth period in Presteigne comes out of his research into the history of the Lucas family.

Michael Seymour is the general editor of *Authors of the Middle Ages* and has written lives of several medieval writers before embarking in his retirement on his present concern with Chaucer and the Pynkhurst Edition of his works, the first volume of which, *The Book of the Duchess*, is about to go to press.

David Stephenson is former Bowra Senior Research Fellow of Wadham College, Oxford, and is now Honorary Research Fellow in the School of History, Welsh History and Archaeology, Bangor University. His books

include *The Governance of Gwynedd* (Cardiff, 1984) and *The Aberconwy Chronicle* (Cambridge, 2002) and he has contributed to *The Welsh King and His Court* (Cardiff, 2000) and *The Impact of the Edwardian Castles on Wales* (Oxbow, 2009). He is currently one of the contributors to the Monastic Wales project at the universities of Lampeter and Aberystwyth. He has published widely on twelfth- and thirteenth-century Powys and the March, and on the construction of the medieval Welsh chronicles. In Radnorshire he has taught adult courses and lectured to the Radnorshire Society, the Abbey Cwmhir Heritage Trust and U3A. Dr Stephenson and his wife live in Llanidloes, and he has recently completed a book on the history of that town.

Daphne Turner was born and educated in southern Ireland and graduated from Trinity College, Dublin. She still holds an Irish passport, but has lived and worked in England since 1961 and took an MA in Linguistics at Reading. Before retirement she was for many years Senior Lecturer in English at Kingston University, where she published a book on Alan Bennett and articles on WH Auden. She has been an enthusiastic visitor to Radnorshire for over twenty-five years, and for the last five she and Peter Conradi have led a poetry discussion group at the Bleddfa Centre.

Hilary Yewlett was taken by her university career as an English lecturer from her birthplace in Bargoed to Swansea, France, Sweden, North America, Cardiff, Mexico and Chile. In early retirement, she discovered her family's history. Her Meredith ancestors first emigrated from Radnorshire to Pennsylvania in 1683. Several made significant contributions to colonial life, but they have been largely overlooked by British historians. Seeking to reverse this neglect of an important aspect of Radnorshire's history, she studied first for Oxford University's Advanced Diploma in Local History and then continued to Cambridge, where she wrote a Master's thesis on migration from early modern Radnorshire. Being a 'granny grad' was so enjoyable that she is now back in Oxford writing another PhD, this time on Reese Meredith of Llandegley and Philadelphia.

Peter J Conradi
Daphne Turner

THE JOINT LIBRARIANS' REPORT

As far as I am concerned the year has been quiet, with little new material being added to the collection for which I am responsible.

It has been my pleasure to prepare the display which gives you some idea of the founders of the Radnorshire Society eighty years ago. The kind of outings the society had during the summer months of the 1930s and also post-war can be seen. I would like to point out that the picture showing an outing having a 'sit-down' tea in the open was blown up into a 12" by 9" print from a tiny print of about 3" by 2", probably taken by a Box Brownie, which was everyone's camera between the wars.

We would love to have more pictures showing Radnorshire life in the twentieth century. You may think that little photographs are of little value. I have just proved that this is not the case. I chose the pictures on display to represent the kinds of animals commonly seen, various activities and places of interest. These all come from our existing collection, which we would very much like to expand. So please think whether you have anything at home, showing past life in Radnorshire, which you would be glad to give us. On the other hand, if you cannot bear to part with some pictures, we would be happy to have them photocopied and returned to you. Please think about it.

G Ridyard

In the course of the year under review the library added, by gift and purchase, a total of five books to its Radnorshire collections. These covered a wide range of topics from the general to the particular but each made a significant contribution to our local knowledge. A detailed list is appended, but two items might be selected for special mention. First, the Royal Commission's publication, *The Welsh Cottage: building traditions of the rural poor, 1790–1900* by Erwyn Wiliam, is not only a scholarly account, splendidly produced and illustrated, but might be said to supplement the earlier Royal Commission report by Richard Suggett on the medieval buildings of Radnorshire. Secondly, it is always a pleasure to acquire for the library a substantial work by one of the Society's members. Keith Parker is our pre-eminent local historian and his new book, *Parties, Polls and Riots; politics in nineteenth-century Radnorshire*, is a welcome and illuminating addition to the series of monographs on the history of Radnorshire he has produced over the years. The accessions are listed below.

EHRENZELLER, Carl D, *Rambling round Radnorshire*, Llandrindod Wells, St Christopher's Youth Hostel, (1972).

LIEBERMAN, Max, *The March of Wales, 1067–1300: a borderland of medieval Britain*, University of Wales Press, Cardiff, (2008).

OWEN, D Huw (ed.), *Settlement and Society in Wales*, University of Wales Press, Cardiff, (1989).

PARKER, Keith, *Parties, Polls and Riots: politics in nineteenth-century Radnorshire*, Woonton Almeley, Logaston Press, (2009).

WILLIAM, Erwyn, *The Welsh Cottage: building traditions of the rural poor, 1750–1900*, Aberystwyth, Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Wales, (2010).

John Barker

THE EXCURSIONS ORGANISER'S REPORT

FRIDAY 19 MARCH 2010

Seventy members gathered in the Aardvark bookshop at Brampton Bryan for a visit to the Church of St Barnabas and Brampton Bryan Hall.

We were met at the church by Mrs Susan Harley, who gave a brief talk on the history of the church and of Sir Robert Harley, who built the church in 1656 after the Civil War. There were only six other churches built in England under the Commonwealth.

Sir Robert died at Brampton Bryan on 6 November 1656 and was buried on 10 December 1656. This was the first service in the restored church, the original church having been destroyed during the siege. Sir Robert built the church before building himself a new house; he said 'he had to build the house of God before his own'.

The first official record for the original church is 1275. Its first known incumbent was Robert de Lacy but it's believed there was a church on the site possibly as early as 1252.

The recumbent fourteenth-century effigy is of Lady Margaret de Brampton (died 1350), who married the first Sir Robert Harley. The church was modernised in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The stained glass window was given to the church by Robert and Patience Ann Harley in 1888.

Gwyneth Guy explained the structure of the building in more detail, its main feature being the very fine hammer beam roof.

Next, Mr Keith Parker, author of the book *Radnorshire from Civil War to Restoration*, talked about the first siege of Brampton Bryan (26 July 1643) and the second siege (February 1644) and the part played by Lady Brilliana Harley in defending the castle against the Royalists. Her husband Sir Robert Harley (1579–1656) was a prominent Marcher Lord and also served as a Member of Parliament. He believed it his duty to remain in London with his son Edward and left the defence of the castle in the hands of his remarkable wife Lady Brilliana. Brilliana and three of her children, together with tenants and musketeers, held the castle. Mr Parker gave us an insight into the part played by neighbours, local gentry, friends and enemies. The strains of the conflict, which had been draining her strength, began to tell and sadly Lady Brilliana died in October 1643 before the end of the war.

The command of the garrison was put into the hands of Nathaniel Wright and the following year the royal forces began a second siege. This time it was more successful: the buildings were sacked and burnt and the prisoners, including the three young Harley children, taken to Shrewsbury. The castle was never rebuilt.

We went next to the main house, Brampton Bryan Hall, and were met in the Victorian dairy by Mr and Mrs Edward Harley. Edward gave an introductory talk on some of his famous ancestors, who had lived at Brampton Bryan for over 700 years, one being Admiral Sir George Rodney, who commanded the British Fleet in the Battle of the Saints, just after the American War of Independence. Admiral Rodney married an heiress of the Harley family – Edward's six times great-grandmother.

There is little left of the house built by Sir Edward Harley after the Civil War. After many years of alterations the house is now mainly eighteenth century, with the exception of the changes and improvements made by the present Mr and Mrs Edward Harley.

We had a fascinating tour of the house and its main features, including many interesting family portraits, Civil War armour, cannon balls dug up from the garden and a large amount of archive material, including the precious code letters from Lady Brilliana to her son in London, giving him the news of what was happening at Brampton Bryan in 1643. We were also shown a knife used by a French spy in an assassination attempt on the life of Robert Harley, later Earl of Oxford.

It was a wonderful day, surrounded by history. We are exceedingly grateful to Mr and Mrs Edward Harley for opening their home to us and making us so welcome.

WEDNESDAY 30 JUNE 2010

We made our second excursion, to Llandudno to visit Plas Newydd, the home of 'The Ladies of Llangollen', and Pontcysyllte Aqueduct.

Our first stop was the Pontcysyllte Aqueduct. The aqueduct has been transporting the Llangollen Canal high over the beautiful Dee Valley since 1803 and is the tallest navigable aqueduct in the world. The structure is a testament to the Industrial Revolution. It was built by William Jessop and Thomas Telford, the greatest engineers of their day, and is now a Grade I listed structure, a scheduled Ancient Monument of national importance; and was awarded World Heritage status in 2009. It is 1037 feet long and 127 feet high, is fed by water from the Horseshoe Falls and holds an incredible 1.5 million litres of water.

We had an interesting forty-five minute trip across and return in a narrow boat with 'Jones the Boat'. When travelling across the aqueduct on one side of the boat, one sees nothing but fresh air and this gives the effect of being suspended in mid-air – it's advisable to keep looking at the beautiful scenery!

On to Plas Newydd, the home of Lady Eleanor Charlotte Butler (1739–1829) and Sarah Ponsonby (1755–1831), known as 'The Ladies of Llangollen'.

In March 1778, the ladies first tried to escape from their families in Ireland. The attempt failed when they were intercepted at Waterford, both dressed in men's clothes and Sarah armed with a pistol. They were taken back to their families. However, eventually their families gave in and, on 9 May 1778, when Eleanor was 39 and Sarah 23, they left Ireland for ever to find a home in England. Travelling with them was their faithful maid Mary Carryll, a great character with a broad Irish accent; she stayed with the ladies until she died in 1809.

They sailed into Milford Haven and started their tour of Wales. They found Llangollen and thought it the most beautiful place they had ever seen. They spent the next two years in lodgings in Llangollen. When Pen-y-Maes cottage was offered to them they moved in and renamed it Plas Newydd. The cottage had four acres of ground that in time was to become their garden. Here they lived together for almost fifty years, until Eleanor's death in 1829 at the age of 90. Sarah died two years later aged 76. It's said that they spent only two nights away from Plas Newydd in all those years. They spent their time transforming the house, making the garden, reading and writing, sketching, embroidering and keeping a daily journal.

In Llangollen they were objects of interest and affection. People were curious and attracted by their romantic story, and their visitors were to number nearly every person of note of the period. As well as local gentry there were such great names as the Duke of Wellington, Sir Walter Scott,

Josiah Wedgwood, Dr Darwin, who took Charles to visit, William Wordsworth, who called there with his family for tea when on their way to stay at Hindwell, Walton, and many others.

The ladies never had much money, and the little they had saved had been mostly spent on their Welsh tour. Eleanor had a small allowance from her father and Sarah had eighty pounds a year from a distant cousin. They rented the cottage for eleven pounds and seven shillings for a half-year; they overspent and were frequently in debt to local tradesmen.

However, they managed to employ a gardener, a dairymaid, the faithful Mary Carryl, another maid and a footman. In spite of very little money their life continued with improvements to the house and garden. They bought furniture, carpets, bookshelves and enlarged the library. Their frequent visitors brought them gifts, mainly carved oak panels from church chests, canopies and bedsteads, and these were all added to the decoration of the house.

Eventually their respectable families resigned themselves to the Ladies' living arrangements and they received small stipends. Sarah was also granted a royal pension. They continued to improve the house and enlarge the garden.

The house we visited was originally an unpretentious small cottage; now it is the fascinating, romantic Plas Newydd, home of 'The Ladies of Llangollen'. We had a lovely sunny day to explore the house and the garden.

Finally I would like to thank my helpers – Anne Goodwin, Alwyn Batley, our treasurer Richard Davies and my sister Marjorie Oakley – for all their help.

Norma Baird-Murray

THE FIELD SECTION REPORT 2010

2010, with the theme of 'artists and writers of Radnorshire' was a very successful year for the Field Section, with good attendance at field outings and social events.

The first event was the annual lunch, held in March at the Metropole Hotel, Llandrindod Wells. The guest speaker was John Oliver, the retired Bishop of Hereford, who spoke of his long association with, and affection for, Radnorshire.

The first field outing, in April, started in Presteigne with a talk on the painter Joseph Murray Ince, by Margaret Newman. We then drove out to Nant-y-Groes Hall, where Judith Kenyon gave a talk on the Elizabethan author John Dee, and the current owner, Mr Vine, gave a guided tour of the house. Mr and Mrs Morgan of the lower Nant-y-Groes provided tea.

The May outing to Cascob church and old school was hosted by Peter

Conradi, who provided tea and afterwards led a walk to see the bluebells on the hill.

The Midsummer picnic was held at Hindwell, with thanks to Colin and Anne Goodwin. Anne arranged a programme of readings from Dorothy and William Wordsworth, to reflect their visits to Hindwell.

The July outing, led by Anne Goodwin, was to two medieval houses associated with the itinerant bardic tradition, Bryndraenog and Pantycaragle. Thanks to Mr and Mrs Thomas at Bryndraenog and Mr and Mrs Harris at Pantycaragle for their warm welcome to the group.

The August outing, led by Gwyneth Guy, was based in Newbridge-on-Wye. After a talk on the village and church we visited Llysdinam house, home of the Venables family, and had readings from Kilvert's Diary and the Russian travel memoirs written by the Revd Richard Venables. Sir John and Lady Caroline Venables-Llewelyn provided tea and showed members their fascinating collections of ceramics and early photographs.

The September meeting was based at Pencerrig, where Richard Vesey gave a talk on the painter Thomas Jones and members walked to places from which he painted his landscapes.

The AGM was held at the Community Centre, Penybont on October 22. After the meeting, Brian Draper gave an illustrated talk on the Upper Wye valley.

The annual social evening planned for November 26 had to be cancelled due to the bad weather.

Gwyneth Guy

POWYS ARCHIVES

The public service operated by Powys Archives continues to be very popular. Over 1,250 researchers visited in person this year, and have accessed in excess of 1,400 original items from our collections, as well as local studies sources and records on microfilm/fiche available in our search-room. Those who are unable to come to Llandrindod Wells have made great use of our research service, and this year 258 hours of research have been undertaken for 221 searchers. Around 800 additional letters and e-mails about the records we hold have been answered by staff. Our webpages on the Powys County Council website have been accessed around 98,000 times.

Rhian James joined the service in December on a permanent contract as Assistant Archivist. Originally from Llanafan, Aberystwyth, Rhian qualified as an archivist in 2010, having graduated with a degree in History from the University of Aberystwyth, then a MA in History from

the University of Cardiff, before undertaking the post-graduate Archive course in Aberystwyth. She has previously worked at the National Library of Wales. Earlier in the year John Haddon from Llandrindod Wells, a graduate in History and Politics from the University of Reading, worked on a temporary contract for four months as Archives Assistant.

In December Powys Archives was awarded £4,000 from the National Manuscripts Conservation Trust (NMCT) to conserve two volumes dating from the Napoleonic period from the Montgomeryshire militia. The two volumes conserved include a regimental book of the Royal Montgomery Regiment of Militia and the Montgomery Yeomanry Cavalry, 1816–1845 (M/L/R/1); and a minute book of general meetings of HM lieutenancy, which includes details of ballots relating to service, 1813–1815 (M/L/M/1). A small grant application to CyMAL (the body for Museums, Archives and Libraries in the Welsh Assembly Government) for £1,548 was also successful, and has allowed the conservation of another militia volume, namely a minute book relating to the militia for the Hundred of Montgomery and containing enrolments, ballottings, and appeals, 1808–1831 (M/L/M/3). CyMAL have also awarded Powys Archives £2,000 to conserve an estate plan of Llangoed Hall from our Glanusk Estate collection. The plan dates from 1755 and is approximately 73cm x 133cm, and consists of watercolour and ink on two joined pieces of parchment. Llangoed Hall has gardens which are Grade II listed. The plan shows the main house and its immediate surroundings.

During the two-week stocktake closure in February staff continued cataloguing parochial material which was transferred from the National Library of Wales in November and December 2008. There are around 200 parishes in the counties of Breconshire, Radnorshire and Montgomeryshire and for each parish a separate catalogue has been created detailing those records that have survived. These include registers of baptisms, marriages and burials, vestry minutes, churchwardens' accounts, records relating to administration of the Poor Law, and charities and schools. Where they survive, series of records, such as settlement certificates, removal orders and bastardy bonds, have been, in the main, retained in bundles and, in order to make them more accessible to searchers, Ann Roberts and Jennifer Lewis have provided some invaluable volunteer help by listing these items individually. Thanks also have to go to Dawn Gill, Archives Assistant, who has taken on the mammoth task of sorting and numbering documents from the 200 parishes in advance of making them available for researchers to use.

Powys Archives is now the recognised place of deposit for parish registers and parochial records for the majority of parishes across the county. In November we were amazed to receive an early register for the

parish of Llandeilo Graban. It contains baptisms, marriages and burials that would have taken place at the parish church from 1669–1812. The register was thought to be lost and it was last seen in 1935 but, having turned up recently in the Midlands in private hands, it is now safely back in Powys. Parish registers which are ‘lost’ very rarely turn up out of the blue, and press coverage saw the Llandeilo Graban register being reported across Britain and even the United States. Two other important parish volumes have also found their way to Powys Archives this year: firstly a register of baptisms for Carno parish dating 1813–1901 – thanks go to Bryn Ellis of Welshpool for locating this volume – and secondly a vestry minute book from Aberhafesp, 1783–1821.

A small grant application to CyMAL for £1,323 now allows Powys Archives to participate in the Archives Wales Reader’s Ticket scheme. The funding enabled the Archives to purchase stationery to issue tickets, and a software licence for the Reader Registration Module in CALM, which is essentially the database which helps administer the ticket scheme. To date around 80 researchers have been issued with tickets. As well as helping the Archives to build a profile of its users, ticket-holders will also be able to receive information by e-mail about archive services across Wales. At present the following services are also issuing Archives Wales Reader’s Tickets: Carmarthenshire, Pembrokeshire, Swansea University, and West Glamorgan Archives. It is also recognised for use at Ceredigion Archives and the Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historic Monuments of Wales, Aberystwyth.

Jessamy Sykes, Liaison Officer for Wales at the National Archives, visited Powys Archives in March in order to meet staff and gain an insight into how the service is run. In particular information about our accommodation, collections, and facilities for the public was discussed, which forms the basis of TNA’s *Standard for Archive Repositories*. Powys Archives subscribed to TNA’s *Standard* in November 2007. A more formal inspection by TNA will be undertaken in due course.

In March, items from the Pryce Jones Collection at Powys Archives appeared in a BBC television programme, *Wales and the History of the World*, which was presented by Eddie Butler, journalist, commentator, and former Welsh Rugby Union player. The programme featured the Euklisia rug which was patented by Newtown entrepreneur Sir Pryce Pryce Jones in 1876 and went on to be exported around the world in the late nineteenth century. No examples of it survive, but researchers on the BBC’s *Wales and the History of the World* programme recreated it, using the original patent. Documents at the Archives show that Pryce Jones sold 60,000 rugs to the Russian army.

Membership of our Friends group now exceeds 300 individuals, families, groups and societies. Our newsletter, *Almanac*, continues to go

to all Friends, libraries, high schools in Powys, Council Members, and other archive services across Wales. Beth Williams and Ann Roberts continue to come to the Archives on a weekly basis, and make an invaluable contribution to the amount of indexing and transcription work undertaken by the service. Jennifer Lewis, Research Assistant with the Archives, has also undertaken volunteer work this year.

Ann in particular has helped to list a large number of Poor Law records from the parochial collections, including settlement certificates, removal orders and bastardy bonds for a variety of parishes across the three counties of Montgomeryshire, Radnorshire and Breconshire. Jennifer is now also assisting with parochial material: mainly eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Poor Law records from Radnorshire. Beth has concentrated on indexing school admission registers from the nineteenth century, again from across the three counties, and has made significant inroads into our holdings of these early registers. As always, the help we receive from volunteers continues to be essential to the service. The work they undertake means our collections are more accessible to researchers.

Powys Archives 2009–2010 Annual Report was published in April. This summarises the work undertaken by staff and gives a full list of accessions received. Details of accessions received during 2010 with particular reference to Radnorshire are as follows:

PUBLIC AND OFFICIAL RECORDS

Trading Standards: Weights and Measures certificates for Breconshire, Montgomeryshire, Radnorshire. Mainly C20, earliest 1825 [Acc 1950]
Records from New Radnor Community Council: minutes 1893–1897, 1976–2002; accounts 1895–2005; planning log 1974–1990; charities account book 1853–1893; OS maps C20 [Acc 1953]

Tithe map and apportionment for Heyop 1842; Memorandum of exchange of land in the parish 1822 [Acc 1958]

Mid Wales Police Authority copy minutes and agendas 1940s–1960s [Acc 1961]

Heyop parish records (additional): register of services 1910–1966; restoration committee 1870–1887; PCC 1926–1976; vestry minutes 1872–1894; Sunday school roll 1933–1944; electoral roll 1925–1929 and churchwarden's accounts 1898–1908; confirmations 1935–1945 (nine volumes) [Acc 1986]

Indentures for the Local Standard for Radnorshire County Council issued by the Board of Trade C19–C20 [Acc 1990]

HM Inspectors' Reports for Presteigne County School (John Beddoes) 1930s–1950s [Acc 1998]

Records from Llandrindod Hospital: records of administration, patients records C20 [Acc 2009]

Records additional from Llandrindod Hospital 1907–1948 [Acc 2010]

Copy of Glanithon School Admission Register 1897–1944 [Acc 2012]

NON-OFFICIAL RECORDS

Copy of a photograph of the wedding of Miss Laura Weale to a Mr Lord at Llanbadarn church 1922 [Acc 1946]

Account book of Llanbister Shop 1820–1847 [transcribed for ‘Goods for the Mrs’ by Lawrence Smith] [Acc 1951]

Llandrindod Wells Tourist Guide book early C20; account book relating to the construction of Llanidloes school 1845–1846 [Acc 1954]

Balance sheets for the Bridge/Metropole hotel, early C20 [Acc 1955]

Letters and other papers relating to the Davies family of Cefn Cido Hall, Nantmel 1772–1879 (39 items) [Acc 1969]

Family research notes for descendants of Edward Griffiths 1818–1900, Llanbister, and Eliza Lewis 1826–1905, Newcastle. Notes by Ms Eleanor M Jones [Acc 1977]

Photographs 1990s–2000s of Llandrindod Victorian Festivals; demolition of buildings; misc [Acc 1979]

Bach family history notes C20: Thomas Bach of Llanddewi Hall, contains C19 family documents [Acc 1982]

Booklet: Methods of construction of the dams, Birmingham Waterworks in the Elan Valley, ES Lindley 1902. Contains original photographs [Acc 1985]

Personal collection of Hon Gwenllian Philippss OBE and her involvement with Girl Guiding: albums, photographs and other literature C20 [Acc 1991]

Abstract of title for the Middleton Estate, Llandrindod Wells 1907 [Acc 1993]

Two scrapbooks from Powys Radnor Federation of WIs, 2005–2009 [Acc 1994]

Records from Titley Estate, Kington, Herefordshire, relating to Breconshire/Radnorshire C17–C19 [Acc 1995]

Business records from Setton and Durwood, Llandrindod Wells C20 [Acc 1997]

Photographs of the Duke-Lloyd family from Argoed Farm, sales particulars for Argoed Farm; two account books relating to Glanrhos and Penlanole Farms C20 [Acc 2000]

Catherine Richards
County Archivist

**RADNORSHIRE SOCIETY BALANCE SHEET
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 30 SEPTEMBER 2010**

INCOME	(2008–09)	
Membership subscriptions		
Society	5,799.75	5,089
Field Section	295.00	285
Balance Transfer	0.00	549
 Sales	66.17	141
Grants	0.00	
Donations	1,000.00	
Building Society Interest (Gross)	159.92	728
Excursion Costs Recovered	1,302.00	1,058
 TOTAL INCOME	8,622.84	7,850
EXPENDITURE		
Cost of producing and distribution of <i>Transactions</i>		2912
2007	3,612.67	
2008	<u>3,909.88</u>	<u>7,522.55</u>
Purchase of books for library	95.94	424
Hire Charges – meeting rooms/equipment	169.30	206
Lecture fees/expenses	50.00	46
Rent – Library (P.C.C.)	100.00	75
Donations – Friends of Radnorshire Museum	200.00	50
In Memory of the late Dr Fenn	<u>25.00</u>	<u>225.00</u>
Membership of Other Societies		173
C.B.A. Wales	15.00	
Br. Association for Local History	58.00	
Cambrian Archaeological Association	<u>25.00</u>	<u>98.00</u>
Field Section costs		47
Newsletter	225.00	
Stationery, post + printing	<u>187.34</u>	<u>412.34</u>
Excursion costs	1,382.00	1,023
Insurances	280.00	278
Administration		890
– Stationery, post + printing	472.15	
– AGM	109.00	
– Website update	<u>49.89</u>	<u>631.04</u>
 TOTAL EXPENDITURE	10,966.17	6,124
 DEFICIT INCOME/EXPENDITURE FOR THE YEAR		£1,726
Band and Building Society balances – 30/09/09	–£2,343.33	£27,723.93
	£25,380.60	
MONETARY ASSETS		
As at 30.09.10 Bank	1,103.32	
Building Society	<u>24,277.28</u>	<u>£25,380.60</u>

N.B. LIABILITIES – Estimated cost of producing and distributing *Transactions* for the years 2009 and 2010 = £9000; and the Field Section Newsletter £300; Bursary Awards £500; KAY TRUST FUND £1,000.00.

I have inspected and audited the accounts of the society and from the evidence provided have found them to be correct.

Stephen Roderick – Honorary Auditor

Richard C Davies – Honorary Treasurer

REVD GRUFFYDD REES: AN APPRECIATION

Geraint Hughes

The Revd Gruffydd Rees came to Radnorshire in 1962 to be Vicar of Llanbister, Llananno and Llanbadarn Fynydd. In 1975 he moved to be Rector of New Radnor, Llanfihangel Nantmelan, Evancoed, Gladestry and Colva before moving for a few years to be Vicar of Llangenni in Breconshire. He then retired to Llandrindod in 1988, where he lived with his wife Margaret until his death at the age of 86 on 14 July 2010. He was a member of the Radnorshire Society since 1962, a faithful committee member for many years and recently a Vice-President. While he was Vicar of Llanbister he produced a history of the parish church, which he described as ‘the mother Church of north Radnorshire’.

The Revd Rees died on the day when the Church remembers John Keble, the poet-priest and inspiration of the Tractarian movement. Like Keble, he spent the whole of his ministry in a country parish, ministering to ordinary people, visiting them in their homes and caring for them. He was a fine example of a country parson, once to be found in every individual parish in the county, and was greatly loved by all his parishioners. Like the village schoolmaster, postmaster, shopkeeper and blacksmith, they are now rarely to be found in our county and we are the poorer for their departure. Such faithful pastors have been the true builders of the Church down the ages and a quiet influence for good in our communities.

ROY FENN: AN APPRECIATION

Lawrence Banks

Contrary to what many may think, Roy was not a Welshman by birth, coming from Purley in Surrey, where he was born in 1933. He narrowly escaped a doodlebug that landed at the bottom of the garden and later a strafing by a German fighter on the beach at Torquay. Ironically, he spent some of his teenage years in Kiel and Hamburg, where his father was working; he was much affected by the post-war poverty and deprivation and I am told that this was where he found his priestly vocation. His enthusiasm for things Welsh may have come from his undergraduate days at Jesus College, Oxford, which his friend Jim Sinclair said he chose because he liked the name. He went on to St Michael's Llandaff Theological College. He took a Bachelor of Divinity degree in Oxford, studying Celtic and Anglican Christianity in the Welsh Marches from 600 to 800 AD.

He was ordained into the Church in Wales at Brecon Cathedral and served as curate in Swansea, Cardiff and Coity before coming as vicar to Glascwm with Rhulen, Colva and Cregina in 1963, where he served until 1974. His final appointment as a parish priest was at the Letton and Byford group of parishes in the Diocese of Hereford. He devoted his life to the middle March and especially Radnorshire and Herefordshire in Gwalia, that portion of the county west of Offa's Dyke. Indeed he might have given the same answer as was given by a witness at the County Court in Presteigne who, when asked if he was English or Welsh, said 'I don't know: I come from Radnorshire'. This is reflected in the title of his new history of Kington – *A Border Janus*, a town looking into both England and Wales.

He had a distinguished academic career both as Head of classics, divinity and sociology at Lady Hawkins School in Kington and later as a tutor and senator for the Open University. But it will be as a historian that he will be best remembered; he was President of the Radnorshire Society, editor of their *Transactions* for twenty years and President of the Cambrian Archaeological Association in 2004–2005, when his Presidential address was on the contribution of RW Banks to the Association during the last half of the nineteenth century. His books, of which there are more than twenty, covered a wide range of interests: railways, chapels, quarrying and local history among many others; they were always produced to the highest academic standards, meticulously footnoted and drawing on original sources, many from the Banks family archives held by the Hergest

Trust, of which he was archivist for more than twenty years. He was a scholar of the highest quality and his biography of Radnor's greatest son, Sir George Cornewall Lewis, is a masterful study of one of the nineteenth century's most neglected politicians, even if he was not at all clear that he found him very congenial.

One of his abiding interests was the interaction between religion, science and the social scene, typified by his history of the Herefordshire Bow Meeting Society, in which he explored the relationship between clerical members and those who had livings in their gift. He was fascinated by my great-grandfather, Richard William Banks, who, in the Darwinian age, found no contradiction between geology and the Tractarian restoration of Kington Church. He was more than half in love with my great-aunt, Margaret Alford, a Christian Socialist, a suffragette, a bluestocking to the core, the descendant of a distinguished clerical family and an early undergraduate at Girton College; Cambridge, whose editions of Livy he used in his teaching without knowing who she was or even her sex. His catalogue of her papers is a fitting memorial to both of them.

When he retired from Lady Hawkins School he became archivist to the Hergest Trust and no family archive can have been better cared for. He was a familiar and much liked figure on the estate, even if on occasions a somewhat querulous one if he thought that the archives were not being given the attention that they deserved. His talks were always illustrated by photographs, often taken by his colleague Jim Sinclair, that included numerous pictures of railway engines and stations. I wonder why there is such a common link between clergymen and railways. He travelled widely in preparing his lectures and Jim Sinclair says that he knew the location of every MacDonald's between Kington and Cardiff.

Later in life he became archivist and historian to Tarmac through James Stirk, the Tarmac in-house lawyer. When Bill Bolsover moved to Aggregate Industries as Chairman, Roy became Company Chaplain and Historian and majored in his role as chaplain. Bill says that 'Roy wanted to model this on the role of the Royal Navy chaplain who was said to be "a friend to all on board"'. This, Roy felt, captured the vast scope of caring for 12,000 employees in the UK and US, from different creeds and backgrounds. In my opinion and those within the company he did excellently, attending all company employees' funerals – of which there were many – and comforting those that were lost at that time of their lives. Roy travelled all over the world in this role and was delighted to have the opportunity that had been denied to him in his earlier life.

The other aspect that he enjoyed was mentoring; he would have all those who asked (and one or two that he persuaded) to spend a morning

at his house in Kington to discuss life and their role now and in the future with the company. This would be followed by a long lunch at the Stag at Titley, a place that I know will miss him dearly. 9 Victoria Road became something of a Mecca for the great and the good of the quarrying industry. All of this came from his great friend and colleague Jim Sinclair, with whom he shared both good times and bad; he had on occasions to help me translate some of Jim's more impenetrable Glaswegian Scottish.

As a result of this he became a Liveryman of the Worshipful Company of Paviors and a Freeman of the City of London, though he never exercised his right to drive a flock of Radnorshire sheep over London Bridge.

Roy was particularly proud of his three children, Adam, Charlotte and Sebastian, and of his granddaughter Emma. Despite all three children having interests and talents that were very different from his own, he always promoted the pursuit of excellence in whatever they did and equipped them to live to the highest ethical standards and to be appreciative of the needs of others. He took enormous pride in later life in being able to share his passion for history with his elder son Adam, with whom he jointly edited the *Transactions of the Radnorshire Society*. However he was not above asking his children for advice on any matter on which he required assistance: for example, on matters of history he would consult Adam; for numerical calculations he would seek out Sebastian; and for everything else there was Lotte.

This all sounds rather sombre; but he was anything but that and we had to make sure that the lunch table was full enough to satisfy his considerable appetite. Indeed Heather Pegg of the Radnorshire Museum says that her last memory of meeting him was over a bowl of parsnip soup prepared by Ann Davies from the Hergest Croft tearooms. I am told that no one liked following his speeches since he invariably overran his time and his acerbic wit set too high a standard for others.

He was a romantic at heart and a Welsh romantic above all. I sadly disappointed him by never becoming High Sheriff, as he dearly wanted to be my Chaplain and accompany my Sheriff's trumpets. In preparing this address I have had invaluable help from his elder son Sebastian, Jim Sinclair and Bill Bolsover, who have filled in a number of gaps in Roy's life that I was unaware of. Thank you all very much.

Roy was a priest, a scholar and a gentleman in the nineteenth-century tradition that he admired so much, and it is most appropriate that he should be buried in this remote Radnorshire churchyard of Glascwm, the green valley nestled in the hills where he spent eleven happy years. I and many others will miss him greatly – as we can no longer 'ask Roy'.

LLYWELYN FAWR, THE MORTIMERS, AND CWMHIR ABBEY: THE POLITICS OF MONASTIC REBUILDING

David Stephenson

The Cistercian abbey of Cwmhir lies in a remote location in the valley of the Clywedog in the medieval lordship of Maelienydd close to its western border with Gwrtheyrnion. It is today one of the most evocative monastic ruins in Wales. Its date of foundation is something of a mystery. Some Cistercian sources place its establishment in July 1143, but any house established at that date was probably short-lived, and it seems likely that the effective foundation was the work of the Welsh ruler of Maelienydd, Cadwallon ap Madog [ab Idnerth], in 1176.¹ The structures visible today, however, do not relate to that period but to a re-building largely carried out some decades later. The context of that re-building is the subject of the present paper.

That the abbey was located in such a remote spot should not be a matter for surprise: Cistercians were required to build their abbeys in isolated places, in order that the monks might live in a tranquillity and seclusion conducive to prayer and contemplation.² What is surprising is the scale of the building indicated by the surviving fragments. It is clear that the re-building of the abbey was extremely ambitious. The nave has been estimated at 242 feet long and 80 feet wide.³ At its eastern end the builders began, but did not complete, a transept. An idea of the projected scale of Cwmhir is produced by some simple comparisons: the length of the nave at Valle Crucis, another Cistercian site near Llangollen, is around 100 feet and that at Strata Florida is 135 feet. Cwmhir was seemingly projected to be the grandest abbey in Wales, and if we extend the comparison to England we find that even Westminster Abbey, where the nave is around 235 feet in length, is smaller.⁴ Two features of the building, therefore, require explanation: the grandeur of its conception, and the fact that the building programme was apparently abandoned long before it was complete. But these issues can only be addressed if we first deal with a further and fundamental mystery that has never been satisfactorily probed: the identity of the benefactor who instigated the rebuilding.

The abbey was studied to good effect by Stephen W Williams in the later nineteenth century⁵ and his work was incorporated in a major survey by CA Raleigh Radford published in 1982.⁶ Radford speculated that the re-building was instigated by Llywelyn ab Iorwerth (Llywelyn Fawr) as part of a plan to extend his principality from its heartland of Gwynedd

throughout much of Wales: ‘The minor dynasty of Madog ap Idnerth could never have contemplated a church on the scale of Cwmhir and the modest resources of the abbey would not have been sufficient to achieve even the partial completion that the ruins attest. But it has been shown Llywelyn Fawr himself was in direct control of Maelienydd for a part at least of the period when building was in progress and his was throughout the dominant voice in the region. Llywelyn was concerned to emphasise his primacy throughout Wales and to ensure the succession of his son, Dafydd, to his undivided possessions. It is not impossible that Cwmhir, placed in a region in which he was directly interested, was designed as a centre for the whole country, a centre which should transcend the traditional bounds of Gwynedd.’⁷

More recently Radford’s approach has been extended by Dr John Davies, who has claimed that ‘by the late 1220s Llywelyn the Great had . . . decided that there was a need for a National Cathedral for the new Wales which he had recently reunited. . . . If such a national cathedral was to be successful there was no point choosing one of the existing cathedrals in the north, or even the Cistercian abbeys of the north because this would alienate the south. . . . Likewise one of the southern Cathedrals or abbeys would not have the support of the magnates of the north. The choice thus fell to mid Wales, where there were three Cistercian abbeys and a cathedral contender at Llanbadarn Fawr. Llanbadarn was already in decline by 1188, however, and from the time of the Lord Rhys, had been replaced by Strata Florida. Ystrad Marchell was in Powys and that was an area where Llywelyn’s power was weakest. That left Cwmhir and Strata Florida – both Cistercian abbeys, and therefore supporters of Llywelyn. It was a straight choice. In the end both were chosen.’⁸ Such speculations have a certain dramatic force and are ingenious. They must however be examined in some detail because they are founded on no positive evidence and appear inconsistent with such evidence as we have.

Let us look first at issues of chronology. Radford believed that ‘historical considerations suggest that the whole of this building sequence [i.e. the rebuilding of the abbey] took place during the twenty-five years of the supremacy of Llywelyn Fawr’.⁹ Radford clearly placed that twenty-five year supremacy in the period 1215–40. Elsewhere, after considering the carving in the five bays originally from the nave of the abbey which were transported to, and re-erected in, the church of Llanidloes after the Dissolution, he commented that ‘the whole series should perhaps be spread over a generation, during which the more elaborate style was developing. A date within the second quarter of the thirteenth century, with a possible extension back for a few years, may be accepted.’¹⁰

The stylistic development that can be observed in the carving preserved at Llanidloes will be examined later but here it is simply necessary to emphasise that we should interpret very loosely the idea that it reveals work that extended ‘over a generation’. It may be more apt to suggest that these developments reveal work that extended over several years.

Dr Davies is far more specific than was Radford in dating the rebuilding. He states categorically that work started in 1228. The year is chosen on the grounds that ‘in 1228 after Llywelyn the Great signed a peace treaty with Thomas Corbet of Caus in Shropshire he was able to carry stone from the Grinshill stone quarries [the source of the free-stone in the surviving remnants of the rebuilt abbey] 12 miles north-east of Shrewsbury . . .’ He pictures the building work coming to an end ‘more or less’ in 1234.¹¹ In order to test these hypotheses we must first examine political developments in the region of Maelienydd in the quarter century after 1215. In that year the Mortimers who had controlled most of the cantref since the mid-1190s had been expelled. It is clear that the initial beneficiary of that expulsion was Llywelyn Fawr, who was indeed establishing at that period a significant hegemony within Wales. He emerged as the effective lord of Maelienydd, acting in the interests of his kinsmen of the dynasty of Cadwallon ap Madog ab Idnerth.¹² Even so, Llywelyn’s hold on the area was by no means secure. He was challenged by Hugh Mortimer, lord of Wigmore between 1214 and 1227, who had the moral if not the military support of the government of Henry III.¹³ In 1224 Llywelyn and his supporters in mid Wales were forced to promise to make amends to those Marcher lords whom they had dispossessed.¹⁴ And it seems that Mortimer was prepared to take action in pursuit of his claim to Maelienydd. A payment of £10 by Cwmhir to secure the goodwill of the king at some point in the year before late September 1225 suggests that the abbey, or at least its granges in the March, may have been in some danger,¹⁵ whilst in September 1226 Hugh Mortimer was amongst a group of Marcher lords told by the king to return lands that they had seized from Llywelyn as the prince and the king were engaged in negotiations.¹⁶ It is fairly clear that the early and mid 1220s were a period of some tension in the middle March and that Llywelyn’s position in that region was somewhat precarious and at times was significantly eroded – as in the case of the brief war of 1223 when the prince lost his hold on the important lordship of Montgomery, where Henry III’s government began to build a major new fortress.¹⁷

The situation hardly improved in the late 1220s. The ‘peace treaty’ with Thomas Corbet pictured by Dr Davies is in large measure illusory. On 15 August 1228 Henry III ordered Llywelyn to observe a truce with

Fulk fitz Warin and Thomas Corbet which the king had extended to 10 September. He assured the prince that he had required Fulk and Thomas to observe the truce in the same way. At the same time the king wrote to many of the major Marcher lords (including Ralph Mortimer, who had succeeded Hugh as lord of Wigmore) requiring them to keep the peace in the March as negotiations between Henry and Llywelyn were under way.¹⁸ In the event all prospect of avoiding a conflict was nullified by the outbreak in September of the war of 1228, the main feature of which was the abortive campaign by Henry III and his Justiciar, Hubert de Burgh, in Kerry (northern Maelienydd).¹⁹ After the conclusion of that conflict and the withdrawal of the royal forces the region of Maelienydd seems to have been more peaceful for a time. Llywelyn seems to have been intent on trying to stabilise the March by arranging the marriages of his son Dafydd to Isabella de Braose and of his daughter Gwladus Ddu to Ralph Mortimer himself.²⁰ But war returned to the March in the spring and summer of 1231 when Llywelyn attacked first the lordship of Radnor and then Brecon before his forces moved into south Wales.²¹ A year's truce was agreed in November 1231 but it is clear that this by no means ended local conflicts in the March: in January 1232 Henry III sent envoys to make and receive amends for breaches of the truce and it was specifically stressed that Llywelyn had complained about the hostile activities of Thomas Corbet.²² In October 1233 it was necessary for the king to order the sheriff of Shropshire to secure the release of four envoys of Llywelyn who had been captured by Thomas Corbet after a truce had been arranged between the king and the prince.²³ Open warfare once more broke out in late 1233, when Llywelyn attacked Brecon, and then moved northwards through the March, destroying the towns of Clun and Oswestry and the castle of Rhuthun/Bryn Amlwg very close to the eastern border of Maelienydd.²⁴ Relative calm was established only in 1234 with the truce of Myddle and was periodically renewed and held reasonably well until Llywelyn's death in 1240. Thus much of the period during which Dr Davies envisages free-stone being transported from Grinshill to Cwmhir was marked by periods of open warfare interspersed by truces which were subject to localised but important breakdown. It should also be noted that the war of 1231 saw the episode in which a monk of Cwmhir is reputed to have tricked English forces into falling into a trap in which they suffered heavy casualties. The abbey paid a heavy price with one of its granges being burned and the abbey itself being plundered. The abbot only succeeded in avoiding the total destruction of his house by agreeing to pay the king 300 marks in order to save the buildings which had been constructed at great cost. The importance of this episode was recognised

by Ralegh Radford, who commented that ‘it is a fair deduction that the reference is to the new church and that it was already in use’²⁵ even though this point seems somewhat at variance with his dating of the carvings of the nave capitals.

In terms of Llywelyn’s policy towards the native dynasty of Maelienydd, it seems that the 1230s saw important developments. It has already been noted that the marriage of Gwladus to Ralph Mortimer was probably intended to stabilise the situation in the cantref. Lands on the eastern fringe of Maelienydd, Knighton and Norton, were granted by Llywelyn to his new son-in-law;²⁶ this grant looks very much like an element in a settlement of past or potential disputes, and perhaps implies that in return Mortimer renounced his claims to Maelienydd. This may well have created a suitable basis for Llywelyn’s restoration to their patrimony of members of the native dynasty. For such a restoration there surely was. In 1232 the monks obtained a confirmation by Henry III of their rights and possessions.²⁷ Such confirmations were often sought at times of political change and, while the approach to Henry III may represent an attempt to regain the royal favour after the events of the previous year, it is possible that this marked the point at which Llywelyn had reinstated the native dynasty as effective rulers of Maelienydd. One grandson of Cadwallon ap Madog ab Idnerth, Cadwallon ap Maelgwn, died and was buried at Cwmhir in 1234.²⁸ The description of him in the Welsh chronicle *Brut y Tywysogion* as ‘of Maelienydd’ strongly suggests that he ruled at least part of that land, as obituary notices of non-rulers are very rare in the *Brut*’s account of the thirteenth century. And other members of the native dynasty of Maelienydd were addressed by Henry III in 1238 when he wrote to Welsh lords forbidding them to perform homage to Dafydd ap Llywelyn as they had been enjoined to do by Llywelyn Fawr.²⁹ The royal mandate once again suggests very strongly that those members of the native dynasty addressed therein exercised lordship in 1238. It is difficult to imagine that Llywelyn would attempt to develop a spiritual and symbolic centre for his extended principality in a territory of which he was not the direct lord and in which he had never actually claimed direct lordship.³⁰ This last point perhaps raises an important question: what evidence do we have that Llywelyn actually wanted to create a ceremonial centre in mid Wales?

Of course it was a matter of convenience, when dealing with the rulers of territories beyond Gwynedd, for the princes of Gwynedd to conduct business in some fairly central location: Llywelyn Fawr presided over the partitioning of Deheubarth amongst descendants of the Lord Rhys in 1216 at Aberdyfi; for the ceremony of fealty to Dafydd in 1238 he chose Strata

Florida; to deal with the rebellious Maredudd ap Rhys in 1259 Llywelyn ap Gruffudd held court in Arwystli, whilst he presided over the trial of Gruffudd ap Gwenwynwyn for alleged treason in the spring of 1274 at Dolforwyn.³¹ But convenience had its limits. The Llywelyns are not recorded as major benefactors to Strata Florida nor did they establish major courts, castles or ecclesiastical centres at Aberdyfi or the unnamed location in Arwystli. Llywelyn ap Gruffudd did build a castle at Dolforwyn but there were severely practical strategic reasons for this. Neither at Cwmhir nor anywhere else in mid Wales is there any sign of a desire by Llywelyn Fawr to relocate the centre of political gravity of his dominions. Other than its strategic importance as a barrier to Mortimer ambitions in mid Wales, there is no sign that Llywelyn Fawr saw Maelienydd as an especially significant area: his court poets do not refer to it, there is no record of his having issued documents from within the lordship, and no clear evidence of his ever having visited the area except perhaps in war time. Even more significant, there is no record of any endowment of Cwmhir by Llywelyn. Henry III's confirmation charter to the abbey in 1232³² refers only to the grants that had been confirmed by John in 1214: if a major charter had been issued to the abbey in the intervening years it is difficult to see how it would have been omitted from the 1232 grant. The silence of all sources that might have revealed some association between Llywelyn and Cwmhir is impressive. Nor is there any sign that the prince was intent on developing a new ceremonial centre. His poets might proclaim the broad extent of his lordship, but until 1230 he styled himself simply *Princeps Norwallie* (Prince of North Wales). In that year he adopted a new and significant style, that of prince of Aberffraw and lord of Snowdon(ia).³³ The jurists of thirteenth-century Gwynedd were developing the idea of Aberffraw, the site of a *llys* in southwest Anglesey, as the principal court of Wales to which the chief courts of the other great realms, Dinefwr in Deheubarth and Mathrafal in Powys, were subordinate.³⁴ The principality of Aberffraw was therefore an expression of Gwynedd's centrality in Llywelyn's principality, just as lordship of Snowdonia left no one in any doubt that the mountains of Gwynedd were the fortress that sheltered Llywelyn's regime. Once adopted the new style of 1230 was retained by Llywelyn for the rest of his life: it argues powerfully, when combined with other evidence and absence of evidence set out above, against the idea that the prince was seeking to create in mid Wales a new centre of gravity for his rule.

If documentation cannot support the idea that the rebuilding of Cwmhir was the work of Llywelyn Fawr, what of structural and sculptural analysis? Dr Davies has argued that while the free-stone for the abbey's

construction came from Grinshill ‘the only source of building mortar was the limestone quarries at Dolau-hir (a distance of at least fifteen miles) – on land which was claimed by the Mortimers. It is almost certain that by 1234, the supply of lime had come to an end and thus so did building work, more or less. The date is confirmed by the use of clay as a matrix between the building stones at the time of the death, at the abbey, of Cadwallon ap Maelgwn in 1134 [*sic, recte* 1234]. The possible niche for his tomb uses clay matrix as does the eastern blocking wall across the huge nave, which indicates the final cessation of the great building works.’³⁵ The problem here is that the location of Cadwallon’s tomb is entirely conjectural, and several other hypotheses will explain a shift from lime mortar to clay. As we have seen the political context would suggest that the post-1234 period was one of relative calm and thus a time when building works would have been possible. And if a source of lime had been exhausted it would have been quite possible to bring in supplies from another, more distant, source. But such a scenario hardly accords with Llywelyn’s evident withdrawal from direct control of Maelienydd in the 1230s; nor does it accord with the use of Strata Florida rather than Cwmhir as the backdrop for the ceremonies of 1238. Most importantly a building programme of the second quarter of the thirteenth century is almost certainly inconsistent with a sculptural analysis.

Perhaps the most significant stylistic feature of the carving from the abbey, which is so well preserved in the church of Llanidloes, is the use of so-called stiff-leaf sculpture.³⁶ This is particularly apparent in the carving of the capitals of the columns that support the arcading. Importantly, those sections of the nave that were taken to Llanidloes in the sixteenth century and reassembled there, albeit in a somewhat jumbled manner, reveal a development from early forms of the stiff-leaf style to much more developed forms.³⁷ This can be described as a sculptural learning curve that must have extended over several years. As the workmanship, as well as the stone, was assuredly English and has, as Radford recognised, ‘few parallels in contemporary Welsh architecture’³⁸ it is hardly credible to suppose that the early forms of stiff-leaf carving would have been employed if the work had been done when the conventions of developed stiff-leaf had been established. It is therefore important to emphasise that the stiff-leaf style in England originated in the later twelfth century and was fully developed by some point in the second decade of the thirteenth.³⁹ A somewhat similar learning curve in stiff-leaf work can be seen in the refashioning of the nave at St Marys church Shrewsbury, completed by 1220.⁴⁰ In more general terms it has been suggested that the remodelling and extension of the presbytery of

Dore Abbey in the late twelfth century and early thirteenth century is paralleled in the work from Cwmhir. Discussing an important shift in Cistercian aesthetics, in which stiff-leaf was a prominent feature, Harrison and Thurlby note that ‘the change to a richer aesthetic is not peculiar to the Dore presbytery but rather conforms to a general trend that took place in Cistercian and other monastic and cathedral churches in the late-twelfth century . . . In the West Country the nave of Cwmhir, Powys, provides the most direct analogy for the new Cistercian richness.’⁴¹

Thus far we have seen that the political/military context, and what can be seen of Llywelyn’s view of how his principality should develop combine with stylistic analysis of the surviving sections of the Cwmhir nave to underscore the extreme difficulty of accepting the proposition that Llywelyn was the driving force behind the rebuilding of Cwmhir in the period 1215–1240. We need therefore to seek an alternative benefactor – at a slightly earlier period. It is difficult to resist the conclusion that that benefactor was Roger Mortimer, lord of Wigmore and conqueror of Maelienydd.

The Mortimers were no strangers to Maelienydd. The family had seized it from its native ruler by the opening of the twelfth century, and had held it until, it seems, around 1136, when they were probably driven out by the Welsh claimant to the kingdom, Madog ab Idnerth. Madog died in 1140, and his sons had to face a renewed Mortimer onslaught, which secured Maelienydd for Hugh Mortimer in 1144. Once again the Mortimers lost their hold on Maelienydd and the native dynasty was restored in the person of Cadwallon ap Madog ab Idnerth, the traditional (re)founder of Cwmhir in 1176. Still the Mortimers refused to accept their exclusion from the lordship: in 1179, while travelling under royal safe-conduct, Cadwallon was killed by Mortimer men – a killing for which Roger Mortimer suffered two years imprisonment. The ability of the family to recover from disgrace was already a characteristic, and in 1195 Roger recovered Maelienydd, restored the castle of Cymaron, and drove to the Wye, seizing Gwrtheyrnion and western Arwystli.⁴² His hold on the western lands was precarious: he was almost certainly driven from Arwystli by the Powysian prince, Gwenwynwyn, who annexed that kingdom in 1197, and it may have been with Gwenwynwyn’s encouragement that Welsh forces destroyed Roger’s castle at Rhaeadr in 1202.⁴³ Roger’s grip on Maelienydd was more secure, and survived even his capture by French forces in Normandy in 1205,⁴⁴ a serious blow that necessitated a costly ransom. There is considerable force in the argument that he reached an accommodation with the native dynasty c.1211, and settled some of them in the lordship.⁴⁵ Some four years later Llywelyn

Fawr had succeeded in constructing a formidable coalition of Welsh rulers, allying with the dissident English barons and taking advantage of the great political crisis of King John's reign. The experienced Roger Mortimer had died in 1214; his successor Hugh maintained Roger's stance of loyalty to the king, and this ensured that he became a target of Llywelyn's forces: he was driven from Maelienydd by the close of 1215.⁴⁶

Mortimer administration in Maelienydd was thus maintained for at least fifteen years, covering the second half of the 1190s and at least the first decade, perhaps the first decade and a half, of the thirteenth century – the precise period when sculptural and architectural analysis suggests that the rebuilding of Cwmhir was taking place. Mortimer had ready access to English stone, and to English craftsmen such as those who were surely responsible for the carving in the nave. Just as significant is the fact that whereas there is no record or tradition of Llywelyn's endowment of Cwmhir, Roger Mortimer issued a major charter to the abbey in 1200, in which he confirmed the grants of lands and rights in Maelienydd and Gwrtheyrnion of previous donors, his own included. This formal act, by which he took the abbey under his protection, was possibly issued at a significant juncture in the history of the abbey, and perhaps in the life of the grantor. It contains a highly significant clause, in which Roger announces that he has granted the charter 'for the safety of my soul and those of my father and mother and my wife Isabel and of my sons and daughters, *and in addition of my men, the living and those who died in the conquest of Maelienydd* [my italics]'.⁴⁷ Reference to the grantor's family is common form, but the extension of the spiritual benefits of benefaction to his soldiers is most unusual. It evokes at once the bond that existed between Mortimer and his men, and the very great importance to him of the re-acquisition of Maelienydd. The history of his house was closely bound up with that land: Roger's great-grandfather had seized it, his grandfather had lost and regained it, his father had lost it once more, and in pursuit of his family's feud with its native dynasty Roger himself had suffered confinement in a royal prison. Now he had restored his ancestors' possession, and had marked his triumph by asserting his patronage over the abbey founded by his ancestral adversaries. It is surely into this context that we must place a parallel resolve to renew, in the latest Anglo-Norman style, the very fabric of that abbey.

The rebuilding of Cwmhir was of course an expensive project, but there is every reason to believe that Roger Mortimer could afford to countenance even the building of the largest Cistercian house in Wales. With lands in over a dozen counties in England, and until 1204 considerable territories in Normandy, he commanded the sort of resources in men and money that

enabled him to emerge as one of the leading barons of the March. And in the last twenty-five years of his life he enjoyed the benefit of royal favour and material support. It is clear that the campaign of 1195 was undertaken with the help of significant royal contributions,⁴⁸ while when Roger was captured on an expedition to Normandy in 1205 King John contributed a loan of 200 marks to meet his ransom of 1000 marks, and permitted Roger's wife to levy a special tax on the Mortimer vassals to raise the remainder of the sum.⁴⁹ We do not have the sort of evidence from which to derive a firm estimate of Roger's annual income or of his total resources, but we do have a number of incidental indications of his wealth. The chronicler Richard of Devizes records – and is the only source to do so – that in 1191 Roger had been exiled by Richard I's chancellor, the bishop of Ely William Longchamp, for a treasonous conspiracy with 'the Welsh'. Apparently, some of Roger's associates blamed him *quod multo munitus milite, castrorum et facultatis habundans, ante ictum ad nudas minas presbiteri cecidisset* [though well furnished with soldiery, and with abundant castles and resources, before a blow was struck he surrendered to the mere threats of a priest].⁵⁰ And at a later date the Pipe Rolls of the English Exchequer provide an even more pointed indication of the extent of Mortimer resources. In the year ending 29 September 1204, Roger's wife Isabella contracted to pay 300 marks and one war-horse to secure manors in Gloucestershire which had belonged to her brother Hugh de Ferrers and of which she claimed to be heiress. She paid off the sum in substantial instalments of 100 marks per year. In 1208, as soon as Isabella's hold on the Gloucestershire lands was assured, she and Roger contracted to pay 700 marks and seven palfreys to acquire the manor of Oakham in Rutland. Within two years they had paid all but 60 marks and the seven palfreys. Still anxious to invest in their family's future, Roger and Isabella then took on an obligation in 1211 to pay the enormous sum of 3000 marks to secure control of the estates of a wealthy minor, Walter de Beauchamp, and to have the right to arrange (for their profit) his marriage.⁵¹ It is clear that Roger Mortimer had access to sufficient resources to enable him to undertake the building of even a large monastery.

In sum, it seems that Roger Mortimer had the resources, the motivation, the opportunity, and the status, as acknowledged patron of the house, to undertake a major construction programme at Cwmhir at precisely the period when the rebuilding of that house took place. The failure to finish the building can probably be attributed to Roger's death and his successor's expulsion from Maelienydd.

NOTES

¹ For a succinct discussion of the problems relating to the foundation-date of Cwmhir see Paul Remfry, *A Political History of Abbey Cwmhir and its early Patrons, from 1176 to 1282* (Malvern, 1994), p. 1.

² A good introduction to this aspect of Cistercian settlement is provided by Janet Burton, 'Who were the Cistercians?' on the website of the Monastic Wales project: monasticwales.org.

³ CA Ralegh Radford, 'The Cistercian Abbey of Cwmhir, Radnorshire', *Archaeologia Cambrensis* 131 (1982), pp. 58–76, at pp. 70, 74.

⁴ Ibid. See however note 37 below for a comparison with Strata Marcella.

⁵ SW Williams, 'The Cistercian Abbey of Cwm-hir, Radnorshire', *Transactions of the Honourable Society of Cymmrodorion*, 1894–95, pp. 61–98.

⁶ Radford, 'Cwmhir'.

⁷ Ibid., p. 74.

⁸ John Davies, 'Abbey Cwm-hir', *Radnorshire Society Field Section Newsletter* 38 (2009), pp. 15–20, at p. 17. Llywelyn's hold on Powys Wenwynwyn was maintained throughout the period 1216–40: David Stephenson, 'The Politics of Powys Wenwynwyn in the Thirteenth Century', *Cambridge Medieval Celtic Studies*, 7 (1984), pp. 39–61.

⁹ Radford, 'Cwmhir', p. 74.

¹⁰ Ibid., p. 71.

¹¹ Davies, 'Cwm-hir', p. 17.

¹² Huw Pryce, *The Acts of Welsh Rulers, 1120–1283* (Cardiff, 2005), p. 17 and no. 247.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ *Calendar of Patent Rolls, 1216–25*, p. 411.

¹⁵ Remfry, 'Political History', p. 12 n. 71 quoting *Pipe Roll 9 Henry III*, [The National Archives (TNA) E. 372/69.]

¹⁶ *Rotuli Litterarum Clausarum II*, p. 154b.

¹⁷ See David Stephenson, 'Llywelyn the Great, the Shropshire March, and the Building of Montgomery Castle', *Shropshire History and Archaeology* 80 (2005), pp. 52–8.

¹⁸ *Close Rolls 1227–31*, pp. 113–14.

¹⁹ CJ Spurgeon, 'Hubert's Folly: the abortive castle of the Kerry Campaign, 1228', in John R Kenyon and Kieran O'Conor (eds.), *The Medieval Castle in Ireland and Wales* (Dublin), pp. 107–20.

²⁰ AJ Roderick, 'Marriage and Politics in Wales, 1066–1282', *Welsh History Review* 4 (1968), pp. 1–20, at p. 17.

²¹ JE Lloyd, *A History of Wales from the Earliest Times to the Edwardian Conquest*, (London, 3rd ed., 1939), II, pp. 673–74.

²² *Close Rolls 1231–34*, p. 127.

²³ Ibid., p. 327.

²⁴ Lloyd, *History of Wales*, II, pp. 679–80; David Stephenson, 'Castell Coch/Castell Hychoet: a possible identification', *Shropshire History and Archaeology* 77 (2002), pp. 120–22.

²⁵ Radford, 'Cwmhir Abbey' p. 69.

²⁶ Pryce, *Acts of Welsh Rulers*, no. 259.

²⁷ *Calendar of Charter Rolls, 1226–57*, p. 155.

²⁸ Thomas Jones (ed.), *Brut y Tywysogyon, Red Book of Hergest Version* (Cardiff, 1955), p. 232.

²⁹ *Close Rolls 1237–42*, pp. 123–24. The addressees included Maredudd ap Maelgwn and Owain ap Hywel and his brothers.

³⁰ Even in his most forthright defence of his occupation of Maelienydd, Llywelyn claimed only to be holding that land *in custodia*; he warned Henry III not to attempt to disinherit *nepotes nostros* – the sons of Maelgwn ap Cadwallon: Pryce, *Acts of Welsh Rulers*, no. 247.

³¹ *Brut y Tywysogyon*, pp. 206, 234. For events in Arwystli in 1259 see J Williams ab Ithel, *Annales Cambriae* (London, Rolls Series, 1860), p. 97, and for those at Dolforwyn in 1274 J Beverley Smith, *Llywelyn ap Gruffudd, Prince of Wales* (Cardiff, 1998), pp. 370–71.

³² See note 27 above.

³³ For careful and cautious discussion see Pryce, *Acts of Welsh Rulers*, pp. 76–77.

³⁴ See also Huw Pryce, ‘Mathrafal: the evidence of written sources’, in CJ Arnold and JW Huggett, ‘Excavations at Mathrafal, Powys, 1989’, *Montgomeryshire Collections* 83(1995), pp. 59–74, at pp. 61–65, especially p. 62.

³⁵ Davies, ‘Abbey Cwm-hir’, pp. 17–18.

³⁶ For a succinct definition of stiff-leaf see the Glossary of the *Corpus of Romanesque Sculpture in Britain and Ireland*, accessed at www.crsbi.ac.uk/resources/glossary.html: ‘fleshy leaf with a trefoil termination, extremely popular in England at the end of the 12th c. and the beginning of the 13th c. It is often applied to capitals.’

³⁷ Radford, ‘Cwmhir Abbey’, p. 71. The account of the carving on the capitals brought from Cwmhir to Llanidloes in Richard Haslam, *The Buildings of Wales: Powys* (London, 1979), is included in the discussion of Llanidloes church in the CPAT Montgomeryshire Churches Survey Project at www.cpat.demon.co.uk/projects/longer/churches/montgom/16880.htm. There is an element of inconsistency in Haslam’s analysis, for at one point [p.141, 1979 ed.] he notes that ‘Cwmhir’s nave would . . . appear to be building by c.1190 and still in progress c.1215’, while elsewhere [p. 140] he considers the south doorway of Llanidloes church, also brought from Cwmhir, to be ‘of c. 1225 or earlier’. And in his comments on Cwmhir itself he suggests [p.216] that the ‘stiff-leaf capitals suggest a building period from c.1200 till c. 1230’. A note to the text makes it clear that Haslam’s comment that the abbey’s ‘great size and its first-rate E. E. style may reflect the patronage of Llewelyn [sic] Fawr’ derives from the view of Radford, whose paper Haslam had seen before publication. The problem is that in trying to accommodate Radford’s views Haslam was led into considerable confusion, as he was clearly unable to accept Radford’s attribution of practically the whole sculptural sequence of the capitals to the second quarter of the thirteenth century. Interestingly, Haslam dates traces of stiff-leaf from the Cistercian abbey of Strata Marcella to between c.1190 and c.1210 [p. 197]. The nave of Strata Marcella was 201 feet long, and thus not entirely dissimilar to Cwmhir. This erodes somewhat the uniqueness of Cwmhir.

³⁸ Radford, loc. cit.

³⁹ For insights into the development of stiff-leaf see Malcolm Thurlby, *Romanesque Architecture and Sculpture in Wales* (Logaston, 2006), pp. 312–13; Stuart Harrison and Malcolm Thurlby, ‘An Architectural History’, in Ron Shoesmith and Ruth Richardson (eds.), *A Definitive History of Dore Abbey* (Logaston 2000), pp. 45–62, at p. 57.

⁴⁰ Peter Williams, *The Church of St Mary the Virgin, Shrewsbury* (Churches Conservation Trust, 2000), pp. 3–5.

⁴¹ Harrison and Thurlby, ‘Architectural History’, pp. 57–8.

⁴² For the history of the Mortimers in Maelienydd up to 1160 see Rita Wood with David Stephenson, ‘The Romanesque Doorway at St Padarn’s church, Llanbadarn Fawr, Radnorshire’, *Archaeologia Cambrensis* 156 (2007), pp. 51–72, at 65–6. The episode of 1179 is recorded by Lloyd, *History of Wales*, II p. 567; evidence of the Mortimer drive into Wales in the 1190s is considered by David Stephenson, ‘Rhyd yr Onen Castle: Politics and Possession in Western Arwystli in the later Twelfth Century’, *Montgomeryshire Collections*, 94 (2006), pp. 15–20.

⁴³ *Brut y Tywysogyon*, pp. 180, 184.

⁴⁴ Charles Hopkinson and Martin Speight, *The Mortimers, Lords of the March* (Logaston 2002), p. 42.

⁴⁵ Remfry, ‘Political History’, pp. 8–12, followed by Pryce, *Acts of Welsh Rulers*, pp. 17, 252.

⁴⁶ Pryce, *Acts of Welsh Rulers*, p. 17.

⁴⁷ BG Charles, ‘An Early Charter of the Abbey of Cwmhir’, *Radnorshire Society Transactions* 40 (1970), pp. 68–74.

⁴⁸ *Pipe Roll 7 Richard I*, pp. 13, 108.

⁴⁹ Hopkinson and Speight, *The Mortimers*, p. 42.

⁵⁰ John T Appleby (ed.), *The Chronicle of Richard of Devizes* (London, 1963), p. 31.

⁵¹ *Pipe Roll 6 John*, p.148; *Pipe Roll 8 John*, p.11; *Pipe Roll 9 John*, p.212; *Pipe Roll 10 John*, pp. 74, 76; *Pipe Roll 11 John*, p. 107; *Pipe Roll 12 John*, p. 213; *Pipe Roll 13 John*, p.273; *Pipe Roll 14 John*, p. 153.

THE EARLY YEARS OF FOOTBALL IN LLANDRINDOD WELLS (1883–1911)

Clive Barrett

Before the opening of the railway line from Craven Arms and the subsequent enclosure of the local commons, both of which led to the growth of Llandrindod Wells in the late 1860s and early 1870s, little organised sport existed for ordinary folk. It is true that each of the few towns in Radnorshire held its annual race meeting, but those taking part were the local gentry and well-to-do farmers. However, the crowds got a lot of pleasure from the side-shows and ale-booths which were attracted to the meetings. Wrexham, which was established in 1873, claims to be the oldest Association Football club in Wales, whilst in Radnorshire the oldest club was formed in Presteigne in 1879. Clubs were formed just after that in Builth and Rhayader, with Knighton and Llandrindod Wells following in 1883. Before this, football matches in Llandrindod Wells and its district were confined to fixtures representing local churches and what can be described only as ‘Lewis family kickabouts’!

THE WHITE STARS KICK OFF

On 1 November 1883, a meeting was held at the Pump House Hotel (roughly on the site where Powys County Hall now stands) to consider the advisability of forming a regular football club in Llandrindod Wells. At this meeting the following officers were elected: AS Willis (Secretary), R Preston Cole of the Rock House Hotel (Treasurer), and as committee members Joseph Hurst and James Lewis, one of the five famous Lewis brothers. The other brothers were Tom, John (Jack), Lewis and David, and they all played a prominent part in the early history of the club, formed the nucleus of the first team and were later described as Llandrindod’s only footballing dynasty. The first recorded captain of the team was HJS Morrell, who was then living at Norton Terrace, but whose family (close friends of Francis Kilvert) lived at Caemawr House, Clyro. The Club’s first elected President was Walter Barnard de Winton, eldest son of Archdeacon de Winton, who had just built near Holy Trinity Church his home the Rectory, which was later converted into the Plas Winton Hotel and much later into the Commodore Hotel. A large room on the north side of the Rectory was used as a parish room; now it is the Log Cabin Bar!

The first committee agreed that subscriptions should be one shilling (5p) and one shilling and sixpence (7½p), and decided that the Club

colours should be a black jersey with a white star, scarlet cap and black trousers. Practice matches by kind permission of Mr E Careless would be held on Tuesdays and Saturdays on the Rock Ddol. The local churches supported the newly formed Club by reporting its games in the parochial magazine which covered the Deanery of Brecon. In those early days when all games were 'friendlies', the rules of Association Football, although laid down in 1863, were interpreted very freely and often differently by the various clubs. From newspaper reports we learn that Rhayader disregarded the offside rule, while Knighton took the throw-in from the side-lines as a kick-in! Several results of games in the 1880s were reported in the local newspapers as having been won by 'one disputed goal'. A disputed goal was so-called when the umpires could not agree or the referee was too far off. It was also possible that a disputed goal was the result of there being no referee available or of the official fleeing the field after allowing or disallowing a goal! Newspapers also reported unfinished games when the bladder of the ball had burst! Nevertheless, the game in the county flourished, and local historian WH Howse of Presteigne in his book *Radnorshire* (1949) described Association Football as 'by far the most popular game in the county, hardly a village being without a team'.

In 1983 a friend, Rex Davies, and I wrote a book entitled *100 Years of Spa Football 1883–1983*. For the earliest years we used the reports of the *Hereford Journal* and *Hereford Times*, and for later the *Brecon and Radnor Express* and the *Wellington Journal* (now the *Mid Wales Journal*), and we attempted to follow the fortunes of Llandrindod Wells Football Club in diary form. Only for the year 1896 did we fail to find any record of the game locally. This article charting the years 1883 to 1911 is based on that book and its edited findings.

Playing in black jerseys studded with a white star, Llandrindod Wells Football Club made its debut on 8 December 1883, and gained a narrow victory over visiting Llangunllo on the Rock House Ddol. They played here until 1899, when they moved to a field near Llanfawr Quarry (close to the present Broadway ground), returning to their original pitch in 1903 for the first twenty years of the new century. The first match in 1883 was witnessed by a large gathering, with Archdeacon de Winton and other guests, including ladies, present on a fine sunny December day. The team captain, Hopewell James Shouldham Morrell, had the honour of becoming the team's first goal-scorer with the only goal of the game. Llandrindod won the return a week later by the same score. The heroes of this first win were James Lewis (goal), TJA Dalgleith and John Owens (backs), HJS Morrell (captain), Joseph Hurst and Thomas Evans (half-backs), Thomas Lewis, John Lewis, David Lewis, James East and J Davies (forwards).



Llandrindod Football Club 1883–84

David Lewis, John Owens, Lewis Lewis, WR de Winton, T Matthews, Tom Lewis, Jim Lewis, J Hurst, J Evans, Jim East, HJS Morrell, John Lewis.

The first games between the physically strong Llandrindod team and the more ‘skillful and speedy’ Rhayader side saw the Spamen’s first defeats: 2–0 away on 29 December 1883 and 3–0 at home on 19 January 1884. Over five hundred people watched the latter match. Another derby (i.e. local) match against Knighton developed into a blood-bath, according to the ‘somewhat biased’ Knighton report, which was followed by angry letters to the local press claiming that a couple of Llandrindod players had been kicking out and swearing at the ‘lily white lads’ of Knighton. It did not help that the match was refereed by the Llandrindod President, who claimed that his team was ‘fair and good tempered’. This did not prevent him from being insulted by the Knighton supporters, who alleged unfairness and biased decisions. The match ‘ceased owing to disputes’, and it was a number of seasons before the Radnorshire clubs met again!

After a match beating Newbridge 3–0 at home, the return away proved to be a scoreless game: ‘The feature of the slightly better Newbridge team being what military tacticians call shock tactics.’ During the opening 1883–84 season, despite controversies on and off the field about disputed goals and refereeing decisions, results were encouraging.

For the 1884–85 season James Lewis was elected captain, and the first match was a 3–0 defeat by Builth. A Builth football reporter described Llandrindod as being completely overmastered and, as the ball had burst shortly after half-time, being extremely fortunate not to be able to complete the match! The Llandrindod secretary, in an angry letter scorning these remarks, stated that the burst ball had saved Builth from certain defeat. Somewhat surprisingly, given the arch-rivalry between the Club

and Rhayader (which still exists today), the second home game against the Wyesiders was a most sporting affair, resulting in a win for the opposition by four goals (and one disputed goal) to nil, and the game was ‘free from wrangling and jarring which has done so much damage to the sport lately’. The team’s reputation as a strong defensive side seems to have blossomed in its infancy, and continued over the next hundred years. The season concluded with an internal Club challenge match between those living above and below the railway line. Mr Morrell captained the lower team and Mr Ross, a National School teacher, the upper, which won 2–0. The Mid Wales Railway donated a silver cup and ran excursion trains on Good Friday from Brecon and Llanidloes, when clubs from these towns and from Newbridge, Hay and Builth competed in a knock-out competition. Builth won the final ‘with good passing and dribbling’. A lot of Welsh football at this time seems to have been played in a bad spirit, particularly derby matches, with much rough play and visitors being pelted as they left the grounds. Many games failed to last for ninety minutes because of disputes, and pre-match threats were openly made to the opposition. The practice of the home side providing the referee, who was usually an official of the club, contributed to the problem.

The winter of 1885 was described as a successful period for the Club, and the increasing popularity of local football was shown by the appearance of a Junior X1, who scored a 6–0 win over their Builth counterparts. The seniors, playing against a strong Builth side, upset their opponents’ ‘clever and active’ football with powerful play. Victories over Leintwardine and Llangammarch followed, and a game against Hay ended in a draw in Hay’s favour! In 1886–87 Tom Ross succeeded HJS Morrell as captain. Fixtures were played against Bucknell, Builth Road, Llangunllo, Llangammarch and Rhayader (notice the influence of the railways on which matches were played) and the Club lost just two games out of twelve. On the initiative of the Llandrindod Club, a Radnorshire team played three inter-county matches. The first at Presteigne against Somerset resulted in a closely contested 3–2 win, and was watched by a large crowd. EC Evelyn of Presteigne, who later that season became Radnorshire’s first ever Welsh international, and Green-Price of Knighton got the goals. A crowd of five hundred saw the second match, which was played at Llandrindod against Shropshire, with the home players doing well, notably Tom Ross, who ‘executed some splendid runs evoking much cheering’. Radnorshire, against the odds, won 3–1, with goals from the Knighton players Green-Price (2) and Owens. Many businesses closed to enable football enthusiasts to attend, and railway ‘specials’ were arranged, with cheap fares between Craven Arms and Llanwrtyd. After the match the



Llandrindod Football Club (White Stars) 1886–87

v. Rhayader, Rock House Ddol, February 1887. Result – Llandrindod 3 Rhayader 0. Back row: G Trew (Treas), T Evans, SL Edwards, WG Watson, R Preston Cole (Chairman), E Careless, F Middleton Evans. Middle row: H Hurst, J East, T Matthews, Lewis Lewis, Tom Ross (Captain), Tom Lewis. Front row: David Lewis, John Lewis, J Owen, Jim Lewis, W Thomas.

two teams had tea at the Rock House Hotel and several toasts were proposed. For the record, the team that day was Cornall (Rhayader), Tom Lewis (Llandrindod), Beaumont (Knighton), J Owens (Llandrindod), Smith (Llangunllo), Crowther (Rhayader), Tom Ross (Llandrindod, captain), Green-Price (Knighton), Jones (Rhayader), David Lewis (Llandrindod), and Owens (Knighton). The third and last recorded county match took place at Knighton, and Radnorshire notched up their third win, this time over Herefordshire 1–0.

At the start of the 1887–88 season, although several players had left the town, it was decided to continue, albeit with a weaker team. James Lewis was elected captain. Fewer matches were played but there were home and away fixtures against Kington, Leominster and Ludlow. Despite these more difficult times, the Club's most ambitious fixture to date was the away game at Edgar Street against the strong Hereford Association X1. The team made a good start but ‘fell strangely away, becoming worn out and finally making a feeble defence to lose 6–0, their play evincing a decided love for kicking the ball wildly in advance instead of systematic passing’. For the 1888–89 season the captain was Tom Lewis, ‘the finest

back in the county', and challenges were issued to Church Stretton, Bucknell, Hereford, Leintwardine, Leominster, Ludlow, Kington, Knighton, Presteigne and Shrewsbury. Leintwardine was well beaten 6–0, and a touring side, Stafford Rangers, was also defeated on its three-match Easter tour. As interest in football had waned in Llandrindod over the previous couple of seasons, the church came to the rescue by means of the Young Men's Friendly Society, which helped to re-organise the Club and also to arrange Junior matches. The opening match on the Rock House Ddol was played against a Doldowlod X1, made of players from Rhayader, Newbridge and Nantmel, under the captaincy of Mr Bromfield of Penlanole, Ysfa (where the Willow Theatre run by Phil Bowen and Sue Best is now). Llandrindod won 3–0. Very little has come to light about other results, although the Club sustained the worst defeat in its short history by losing 11–3 to its neighbour and arch-rival Rhayader.

The moderate attendance at the AGM in the Parish Rooms at the start of the 1890–91 season, when Archdeacon de Winton presided, shows that times haven't changed! Early matches were played against Newbridge and Builth. The Club played its first ever cup match when they entered the eight-team Presteigne Challenge Cup competition. A large crowd watched the second-round tie against Rhayader, which scored a late winner, with good football from both sides in the usual sporting game between these two clubs. The Llandrindod team was strengthened by the inclusion of the Howell brothers, Gwynne and Morry, star members of the powerful Builth X1. The disorderly behaviour between Llandrindod and Knighton continued in a reserve game against Knighton Rovers, when the match was abandoned in the eightieth minute following a free fight between the two teams. Tom and Lewis Lewis 'guested' for Builth against Rhayader, but the match had to be replayed, because Rhayader protested that the brothers lived in Middleton Terrace (now Street) and were therefore outside the six-mile radius of the Builth ground. The winger WG Bufton distinguished himself by playing for the London Welsh Association on two occasions, while E Gwynne Howell, who was the first Builth player to be capped during the 1886–87 season, WG Evans (also of Builth) and JCH Bowdler (Rhayader) played in Internationals during the 1890–91 season.

In the 1891–92 season the Hereford Cup competition was extended to twelve clubs. Llandrindod drew Builth in the first round, but later scratched. The Town was unfortunate to meet the powerful Rhayader side in an early round of the Presteigne Cup. Rhayader went on to retain the trophy and finish runners-up in the Herefordshire Cup. Inter-village matches were very popular at the time; when Howey Excelsiors

convincingly beat Builth Road 4–0 it was a torrid affair. Football results and reports in the *Hereford Times* tended to be sandwiched between accounts of a tussle (eg between Llandeilo Graban and Erwood) and English First Division reports. During the 1893–94 season there was more coverage of the Reserves than the first team, and it was recorded that three stalwarts of the future, Walter Scandrett, Sid Owens and Jack Greenwood, showed promise. Lewis Lewis, one of the outstanding Llandrindod players of this period, who was said to be the fastest runner in the Principality, and who later went on to play for Aston Villa, had his League career curtailed by a knee injury. Locally he played for Builth, notably in the final of the newly inaugurated South Wales and Monmouthshire Senior Cup, which was staged on the St Helen's Ground, Swansea against the Eastern Division winners Cardiff. Builth achieved a sensational 1–0 victory, with a goal from ex-Welsh international Gwynne Howell in front of a 3,000 crowd. This surpassed the gate at the Wales versus England game earlier in the same month, and there were excursion trains from Builth, Cardiff, Newport and Llandrindod.

During the 1894–95 season football developed locally, resulting in the Town's first participation in the Herefordshire Senior Cup, when they lost 7–4 to Rhayader on the Ddol in a brilliant game in front of an excellent crowd. In the South Wales Cup, Rhayader gained their second cup victory over the Town and went on to win the competition. It is interesting to note that the defender Andrew Mills, a prominent member of the Knighton senior XI, reached the semi-finals of the Welsh Cup after a fine run in the competition, and showed such excellent form that he was signed up by the English League club Blackburn Rovers in the close season. There he partnered the redoubtable full-back Bob Crompton, who was capped 41 times as an England player. Mills later played for Swindon Town, and captained Brighton and Leicester Fosse (later City). When he moved back to mid Wales, his constructive displays and coaching were features of Llandrindod teams during the early 1900s. During the construction of the Elan Valley Dams in 1897–98, a team from there beat the local team 6–0 on the Ddol in their first 'friendly'. A minor sensation was caused when Elan Valley won the return fixture 4–0, and a 'type of obituary' appeared in the *Llandrindod Advertiser*. A letter from a correspondent signing himself 'WAG' appeared on a large black postcard with a deep black border: 'In memory of the Llandrindod Wells Association Football Club which fell asleep on the Cwm Elan football field on 4th December 1897'. After being in the shadow of other local sides, the Town now had a lot of promising footballers who were to keep Llandrindod amongst the pacesetters in mid Wales for many years to come.



Llandrindod's first ever cup success – winners South Wales 'Junior Cup'
1897–98 – Rogerstone 0 Llandrindod Wells 2

Back row: RE Moseley, SC Williams, AL Careless, JL Wilding, J Lane, WI Earle.
Centre row: Jack Arthur, Ted Sheen, Jack Greenwood, Bill Bound, Penry Jones,
George Scandrett. Front row: Seymour Edwards, Bert Jones, Sid Owens, Harry Morris,
Bert Davies.

The highlight of the season was the Club's run in the South Wales Junior Cup. Brecon was beaten in the first round, and the Town finally reached their first ever cup final. They won 2–0 against Rogerstone (Newport). The final match report read:

A stubbornly fought final was played at Brecon in splendid weather before a large assemblage of spectators. During the first half Llandrindod showed opportunity in attack, and as a result of a fine combination scored just before the interval, Bert Jones getting his second goal early in the second half. Subsequently the cup was presented to Wells' captain Sid Owens at the Bells Hotel by the Lord Mayor Councillor Aneurin George.

Great excitement prevailed in Llandrindod on the team's arrival, a procession was formed headed by a brass band, with the captain carried shoulder high bearing the cup paraded around the town.

In the 1898–99 season competitions which Llandrindod entered included the South Wales Senior and Junior, Leominster Charity and Herefordshire Cups, with the reserves in the Leintwardine Cup. Aberystwyth, one of the strongest teams in the country at the time, were the visitors in the first round of the South Wales Senior Cup. Llandrindod was minus their mighty full-back George Lewis ‘The Pitch’ and lost a fine game 3–0.

Having an immaculate game on the Aber side was the great Welsh goalkeeper Leigh Richmond (Dick) Rouse, described as a prince amongst British goalkeepers, a great sportsman who, it was said, could punch a ball further than most players could kick it. Later he was to earn 24 international caps, and played as an amateur for many English League clubs. In the final of the Herefordshire Challenge Cup, which for convenience was played on Knighton’s Bryn-y-Castell ground, their opponents were their old rivals Builth, who just deserved to win 2–1, with the Town’s half-backs shining in a match played in pouring rain. It seemed to be normal practice at the time that should a cup match be lost some sort of protest should be made. After that Cup final, the Town claimed that Builth had fielded an unregistered professional, Lewis Lewis (formerly a Llandrindod player), because he had been presented with a dressing case by his new club in the close season. Just to emphasise this point, the eligibility of the Builth winger Whislay was also queried, but both protests were dismissed. As a matter of historical interest, the white star kit of the early seasons appears to have been replaced by red jerseys at this time.

At the start of the 1899–1900 season, Sir Powlett Millbank was elected President at the AGM, when the Revd Singers-Davies presided. The Club’s balance in hand amounted to the then ‘princely sum’ of five shillings and nine pence (29p). Sid Owens, after his inspiring leadership during the previous season, was re-elected captain, with Jack Arthur as vice-captain. The Rock House Ddol, which the Club had used since 1883, was no longer available and it was decided to accept Mr John Lewis’s offer of a field near Llanfawr Quarry, very close to the present Broadway Ground. Entering the Welsh Cup for the first time, in the opening round on the new pitch they defeated Elan Valley, a team nicknamed ‘The Scotsmen’ and mainly composed of construction workers on the Birmingham Corporation Reservoirs, and beat Builth by default in the second round. They reached the Herefordshire Cup final for the second successive season and by way of revenge beat the holders Builth in the semi-final. For the final the team was well supported at Edgar Street, excursion trains being packed full of spectators, who during the match displayed much enthusiasm, and were serenaded by a Hungarian band who played choice and classical selections! The match itself was an anti-

climax, described as ‘being as flat as the Herefordshire countryside’. Llandrindod, who were vastly superior to the opposition Ebbw Vale, won comfortably. Their goals came from a Tommy Evans free kick, and a Lewis Lewis penalty ‘which whizzed past the Ebbw Vale keeper’s auriculars’! A formal reception took place in Llandrindod on the Monday evening, when a procession, led by the local drum and fife band followed by carriages carrying team members, did a tour of the various hostelries. Hundreds of people turned out to take part in the celebrations. This was to be the last season of friendlies and cup football. The club’s playing record for 1899–1900 was: played 25; won 15; drew 4; lost 6.

GLORY DAYS IN THE ‘OLD’ MID WALES LEAGUE

By the beginning of the twentieth century in 1900, it became evident that, although cup ties and challenge matches had done much to popularise the game in mid Wales, local football needed more organisation and stability. The idea of a league was accredited to a conversation between David Jenkins, a Brecon newspaper editor, JP Hughes of Builth and Penry Jones of the Llandrindod club. Local clubs were contacted and, at the first meeting of the Mid Wales League at the Lamb Hotel in Builth in May 1900, the following clubs were accepted as founder members: Brecon, Builth, Hay, Knighton, Llandrindod and Rhayader. Penry Jones of Vaga House, High Street, Llandrindod Wells (next to where Sayce Printers is now) was elected Secretary, and it was largely due to his untiring work and energy that the League got under way so successfully. The League Championship Cup was donated by Mr (later Sir) Charles Venables-Llewellyn of Llysddinam, Newbridge-on-Wye, the League’s first President. (The late Lady Delia, once President of the Radnorshire Society, was his daughter-in-law.) Llandrindod’s recent results had made them favourites to win the new League, with Knighton their likeliest rivals, which was exactly the position at the end of the season. Llandrindod won 8, drew 1, lost 1. However, the Knighton club had the satisfaction of inflicting that one defeat in the very first game. Encounters between the clubs over the years have always been fierce and niggly, and this first League match was no exception. Spa skipper Ted Bufton and Knighton defender Morris were sent off after a ‘heated altercation’. The Llandrindod team at first refused to carry on without their captain, but the referee persuaded them otherwise, although ‘the final proceedings were not of a gentle nature’. Sid Owen got the Club’s first league goal, but because of poor finishing from the forwards they slumped to a shock defeat. As the new champions, Llandrindod kept up their fine record with a 1–0 win over a Rest of the

League team. Before the start of the League programme, the Club had a fine run in the Welsh Cup, defeating Knighton and Flint. The professional club Rhyl were the visitors to the ‘boggy’ Quarry Field in the fourth round. In spite of non-stop rain since Friday, there was a crowd of six hundred to see the Town’s most important game. In a vigorously contested match, the home team did well to hold their more skilful and fitter opponents to 2–2 at half-time, and Rhyl only got the winner in the eighty-eighth minute. The Town’s half-back line was the strength of their side, with Lewis Lewis also outstanding at full-back. His consistent displays earned him selection in the one and only Welsh International trial match of the season at Wrexham, although not surprisingly he did not get his cap, as most of the trialists were English League professionals. The Town’s reputation as the League’s leading team was emphasised by their fine win over the South Wales League champions, Aberdare.

In the second season of the Mid Wales League, the Club was runner-up to Knighton. Llandrindod lost 7–1 in the final of the South Wales Cup to a strong Aberdare side at Aberaman (near Aberdare, Glamorganshire) in front of a gate of 3,000. At this time, the local guiding light Penry Jones formed the Corinthians, a team consisting of veteran Town players and youngsters, to play friendly and cup matches. In the following 1902–03 season Knighton again won the four-club slimline League, with the Town the runners-up. In fact they met Knighton eight times in league, cup and friendly matches with honours being shared: three wins each and two draws. The club reached the Welsh Senior Cup third round, losing 10–0 to the holders Wellington (Shropshire), a team of professionals who normally played against English League reserve teams. For the 1903–04 season there was a move to organise a junior team and more friendlies, with home games once again being held on the Rock House D dol. Knighton managed their first cup win over Llandrindod for a few seasons in the second round of the Welsh Senior Cup. However, compared with previous years the popularity of the South Wales Cup was waning, as was shown by the fact that the Club reached the semi-final without kicking a ball. At that stage they lost 2–1 to a strong Treharris side, a match which was played on a neutral ground at Nelson (Rhondda). An exhausting trip of three hours in an open brake (charabanc) in a blinding snowstorm and four more hours on a train was hardly the best preparation for an important cup tie!

At the AGM at the start of the 1904–05 campaign it was announced that the Herefordshire Cup winners’ medals won by Llandrindod in the 1899–1900 season had at long last arrived, suitably inscribed, and had been presented to the players. George Scandrett, a player having League

experience with Aston Villa, was appointed team captain, with Sid Owens as vice-captain, and coaching was delegated to the experienced Mid Wales League player and ex-professional Andrew Mills. The mighty Aston Villa, who later that season won their fourth FA Cup Final, came and stayed in the town, beating a Llandrindod & District side 9–2. Several newcomers were blooded, including the young full-back Jeffrey Jones of the Brynawel Hotel (now the Glen Usk Hotel) and the forwards Tommy Owens and Ernie Morris, all members of the County School Old Boys' team. Again 'The Blues', as they were now known, finished runners-up, with their neighbour Rhayader champions for the first time.

In 1905–06, with still only four teams in the League, the Town won the title: the defence was classed as excellent during the season. In one League fixture only six Builth players completed the game, the others having been sent off or walked off in sympathy. Following 'a loud shout' from a grounded Builth player, the Town's Archie Jones was also dismissed. The Club reached the final of the Leominster Cup for the first time by beating Merthyr Vale, but lost to Hereford Early Closers in the final. Aston Villa came searching for young talent and beat a local select team in front of seven hundred spectators. Both Tommy Owens and Andrew Mills played in a final Welsh International trial, but did not make the final eleven.

In the 1906–07 season, both Elan Valley and Rhayader having dropped out (most probably a result of the dams being completed and workers leaving the area), Llandrindod Corinthians sportingly came into the League, thus saving it from possible extinction. Two other Llandrindod teams, Wednesdays and Excelsiors, played friendlies during midweek half-day closing. Aston Villa paid another visit to the town for a pre-season friendly against a Llandrindod & District side captained by the rising star Jeffrey Jones. In the fourth round of the Welsh Amateur Cup the Club lost at home to the holders, Buckley Engineers. In the Leominster Charity Cup final they drew with Hereford Early Closers after leading at half-time, but no record was found of a replay. (Possibly they shared the trophy.) The team's display of brilliant football was considered their best ever cup performance up to that date. Of local interest, Gordon 'Gogg' Jones of Talgarth (a great-uncle of mine), who played for Shrewsbury and Accrington Stanley and later lived in retirement in Llandrindod, was a member of the Welsh team which won the Home International Championship for the first time in the history of the game. Gordon Jones was also a great-uncle of Ken Price of Penybont, who was himself a Welsh Youth international, and who now possesses his caps and medals.

In 1907–08 more teams, including Howey, joined the League. Builth

retained the trophy, with Llandrindod again runners-up. The Knighton Cup final was lost to Church Stretton. At the end of the season supporters subscribed towards a gold medal for the fastest runner in the Club; Ernie Morris won. The Town team, which won the championship of the 1908–09 season with the loss of only one game, was described as the best ever seen in the Spa up to that time. In the final of the Knighton Cup, they beat Ludlow Town. Llandrindod Corinthians also had a great season, beating the famous Hereford Excelsiors in the Kington Cup final, but losing to Ludlow Town in the Presteigne Otway Cup final. Penry Jones, who was instrumental in starting the Corinthians, refereed English and Irish matches at Bristol and Belfast. There were moves to establish a local rugby club, and a trial match was played on the Ddol between teams of residents and outsiders, but the experience was short-lived. In their first ever match Llandrindod was defeated 27–0 by Shrewsbury.

NOTES

1. During the 1911–12 season, the Llandrindod Hospital Cup was donated by Councillor RP Culley, when he was described as a ‘rare friend of football’. The period from 1911 to 1914 was the most successful in the Club’s history: they were League champions twice and runners-up once, and in three seasons, out of a total of forty-six league matches, they lost only four.
2. Two Llandrindod players achieved Welsh International honours during the period 1883–1911. They were:
Tommy Owens – In the 1910–11 season inside-forward Tommy Owens was awarded his only cap when he equalled Jeffrey Jones’s achievement of representing Wales at amateur level. Although Wales were decisively beaten 5–1 by England at Newtown, Owens was reported as ‘making a number of well judged passes, rarely if ever getting one in return, but he was far from a failure’. It was to be his only cap, but his consistently high standard of play had been rewarded by his country, and he was to remain an outstanding performer for Llandrindod, until the onset of World War I.
Jeffrey Jones – During the 1907–08 season Jeffrey Jones won his first cap in the first Amateur International against England, giving a creditable performance. He gave a penalty away, apparently so undeserved that Vivian Woodward, the noted English centre forward of the time, was said to have made no attempt to score from it. Jeffrey was selected for the full International against Northern Ireland at Aberdare in April 1908, and again had a good game; the great and famous Billy Meredith was in the same team. In the following 1908–09 season he made his second full appearance against Ireland in Belfast, followed by a third full International in the 1909–10 season versus Scotland. He also played several matches for the Northern Nomads, the noted Lancashire amateur club, including one at Hampden Park against the famous Scottish amateurs Queen’s Park. In 1909–10 he had the honour of skippering the Welsh Amateur team, which played most of the game with ten men, losing 6–0 to a strong England side at Huddersfield. So, by the end of a career in which he remained an amateur, Jeffrey had represented his country twice at

amateur and three times at full level. In the first century of Llandrindod football he must get the vote as the club's most illustrious player.

3. All quotations are drawn from the following sources:

Brecon & Radnor Express, October 1889–May 1908.

Hereford Journal, October 1887–June 1905.

Hereford Times, October 1887–June 1905.

Radnor Times, October 1883–September 1889.

Wellington Journal (now *Mid Wales Journal*), March 1886–April 1908.

REPORTING THE BUILDING OF THE ELAN VALLEY DAMS

Bronwyn Curnow

To fully understand what lay behind some of the reporting and the attitudes of those involved in building the dams, it is necessary to look at the historical background and what life was like in both Birmingham and mid Wales at the time.

As with all the larger cities in Victorian Britain, Birmingham's rapid expansion and consequent increase in population brought with them serious health problems. People, usually coming en masse from the countryside, were housed in hastily erected accommodation with little or no sanitation, with water obtained from unreliable sources. In 1840, Birmingham had been regarded as a relatively healthy place to live, but by the 1870s the death rate had risen to 25.2 per 1000 – 3% above the national rate. This was entirely due to the high incidence of diseases such as cholera, typhus, typhoid and dysentery – all of which were mostly avoidable with proper sanitation and fresh water. In fact, water was so impure that it was far safer to drink beer! What was to be done? Birmingham was unique in that it was essentially a middle-class town led by industrialists and businessmen. There was no local aristocracy to dominate the social and political scene and thus Birmingham had a long-standing reputation as a radical town through the activities of Thomas Attwood and his involvement with the Chartist movement. But despite this it remained relatively mediocre until 1859, when Thomas Avery became Leader of the Council. Avery began a painstaking advance in public health and education with the opening of public washhouses in 1862 and the opening of the Central Free Library in 1865. In 1869 he unsuccessfully advocated full municipal control of the town's water supply, which was, at the time, in the control of various private companies.

Avery was influenced by the spread of the so-called 'civic gospel', the origins of which lay in the changes in middle-class thinking about their role and the responsibilities of urban government. The leading advocates were Non-conformist ministers such as George Dawson, whose views were formed by religious idealism and the conviction that local government must assume increasing responsibility for the welfare of its community. Other Non-conformist ministers such as Charles Vince and HW Crosskey took up these views. Crosskey was the minister at the Unitarian Church, which was attended by many of the most influential and wealthy members of Birmingham society such as the Martineau

family and the future, charismatic mayor of Birmingham and MP, Joseph Chamberlain.

Joseph Chamberlain was mayor of Birmingham between 1873 and 1876 and it was during this time that the principles of the civic gospel were fully put into practice and Birmingham became known for its so-called ‘gas and water socialism’. Birmingham was not, however, unique in providing ‘gas and water socialism’ but the town received greater publicity and longer-lasting recognition through the involvement of the flamboyant and popular Joseph Chamberlain.

In 1875 Birmingham finally purchased the water supplies for the city and the Sanitary Census that year reported ‘the staff was so limited that its capacity is exhausted in dealing with nuisances which are allowed to become intolerable before they are brought to the notice of the inspectors or are discovered by them’.

The Birmingham Corporation Water Committee decided to look for unpolluted sources of water for their city and it was not unnatural that their gaze should fall upon mid Wales. Between 1871 and 1892, Liverpool had been building the reservoir at Lake Vyrnwy to supply its needs. Prior to that, in 1870, Sir Robert Rawlinson (a highly respected sanitation engineer) suggested, at the prompting of an engineer by the name of James Mansergh, that the Elan Valley was an ideal location for building dams. Mansergh had worked on the building of the Mid Wales Railway in the 1860s and, when the railway was being built at Rhayader, Mansergh had spent some time exploring the surrounding area. According to Mansergh’s obituary in the *Times* of 16 June 1905, Mansergh had drawn up plans but ‘the boldness of the scheme was too great for its immediate adoption by the council’.

In 1890, Sir Thomas Martineau, Chairman of Birmingham’s Water Committee, was commissioned to find a suitable source of water for the city. Mansergh presented his 1870 scheme and this time it was adopted. The high, narrow valleys, impermeable rock and high rainfall all combined to make an ideal location for the reservoirs. A bonus was that there was a sufficient drop in gradient between the Elan Valley and Birmingham to enable the water to travel through the pipeline by means of a gravitational feed, which did away with the additional expense of pumping water.

On 8 January 1891, Mansergh presented his report, along with a scale model, to the Birmingham Water Committee and in February 1891 representatives from the Committee visited Wales to see the area for themselves. In his book on the Elan Valley Railway, Judge states that this was a secret visit but it was, in fact, reported in the *Brecon and Radnor Express* of 20 February 1891. Under the Rhayader news column, the paper

simply reported that ‘the Mayor of Birmingham and members of the Corporation, were staying at Rhayader last week. The object of the visit was to examine the site of the proposed new water supply at Nantygwyllt (*sic*). They put up at the Lion Hotel’. No mention was made of any civic welcome either by Rhayader Town Council or Radnorshire County Council, or of any attempt by either party to meet socially. The next paragraph went on to report on a Temperance meeting held in the town.

The Birmingham Water Committee debated the issue for the best part of 1891 and a bill was finally presented to Parliament with the Royal Assent given on 27 June 1892. The Act allowed the Corporation of the City of Birmingham ‘to obtain a supply of water from the Rivers Elan and Claerwen in the counties of Radnor, Brecknock and Montgomery through the purchase of 71 square miles of “gathering grounds”, the construction of 6 reservoirs with stone dams; the construction of a railway to carry men and materials into the valley from the main Mid Wales Railway and the construction of a 73 mile long aqueduct to allow the water to gravitate to the Frankley reservoir, near Birmingham’.

The Water Committee also took another major decision concerning the building of the project: ‘Your committee felt that it was essential that these dams should be constructed in the way that would best secure their being absolutely safe and water tight, and in view of the immense responsibility, both legally and morally, resting on the Corporation with respect to these works, considered that the question of safety was of primary importance and they would be constructed by the Corporation, without the intervention of a contractor’. The cost to the Corporation of Birmingham was, in 1892, estimated at £6 million.

Well, that was the situation in Birmingham – but what about the situation in mid Wales? In contrast to Birmingham, the population of rural mid Wales was rapidly declining. The prosperity of south Wales was founded on its iron and coal industries, while in north Wales there was slate. The mid Wales towns of Llanidloes and Newtown had been famous for their woollen mills and tanneries but had lost out to the more modern, large-scale mills of Rochdale and Bradford. The only other industry was livestock and farming. The agricultural depressions of the 1880s and 1890s left rural mid Wales in great economic difficulties and increased the movement from the land. It was reported that in 1881 Radnorshire was losing 19% of its population each year. People were moving to the urban areas only to find that living conditions were even worse than in the countryside.

The Welsh countryside was beginning to settle down after the so-called ‘Tithe War’, which had raged between 1880 and 1890 over the practice of

making largely Non-conformist tenant farmers pay tithes to the Church of England clergy. In 1891 the Tithe Bill changed the law so that the tithe burden fell onto the Anglican landowners, which further depleted their fortunes. A closely fought election took place in Wales during 1892, which was followed by a Royal Commission into the land question in Wales. However – as is often the way with Royal Commissions – by the time the report was finally published the Liberal government was no longer in power and the Tory government simply shelved it. Differences in religion, language and politics alongside the falling incomes of the landowners led to the emerging political ferment in Wales just at the time that the Birmingham Corporation decided to build the Elan Valley dams.

OBJECTIONS: 1891 TO 1894

The first signs of public opposition to the proposals to build the dams came from George Whitfield of Birmingham, who wrote in the *Birmingham Daily Gazetteer* of 20 January 1891 that the scheme was being pushed through without proper consultation with the ratepayers of Birmingham. While the Birmingham Corporation debated the scheme, the news was broken to the readers of the *Brecon and Radnor Express*. Its full title was the *Brecon and Radnor Express and Carmarthen Express*, so I think from now on I shall simply refer to it as the *B & R*.

On 6 February 1891, under the headline ‘Proposed new water supply for Birmingham’, again not front-page but under its Rhayader news column, the paper reported the planned utilisation of water from the River Elan to supply Birmingham and added that, should the work proceed, Rhayader would undeniably benefit very considerably from a commercial point of view.

Three weeks later, on 27 February 1891, the same paper gave extensive coverage to a report headed ‘Water supply of London’. The paper described as ‘startling’ the proposal to ‘supply London with water from the Usk and the Wye which would involve using Llangorse Lake as a reservoir, flooding two villages and three churches, as well as moving the railway line by three miles’. The cost of this particular scheme was estimated to be over £15 million (Victorian values) and the unnamed correspondent advised that the people of the Wye and Usk valleys should watch the proceedings carefully. Those of us who have enjoyed the tranquillity of Llangasty and the beauty of Llangorse can only be very grateful that this particular scheme came to nothing.

On 13 March, the *B & R* let it be known that ‘the old mansion of Nantgwyllt, the seat of Mr Robert Lewis Lloyd, and Cwm Elan and

grounds, as well as many farms in the valley, will be submerged and also a church and chapel'. The report concluded that the Elan scheme would eclipse the Vyrnwy scheme. A longer article in the following week's paper summarised the scheme and noted that James Mansergh had been appointed to check the suitability of the area: 'as the London authorities are including the same rivers in their scheme it remains to be seen who will succeed in first obtaining Parliamentary powers'.

In fact, the rivalry between Birmingham and London was to rumble on throughout the building of the dams and was used by disgruntled Birmingham ratepayers in their attempts to delay the scheme on the grounds that the Birmingham Corporation was rushing into the scheme simply to thwart the plans of the London County Council.

By the middle of the summer, the newly formed Radnorshire County Council was also becoming concerned about the scheme and resolved that its Clerk should speak with neighbouring local authorities and find out to what extent the County's interest would be affected by the Birmingham Corporation Water Supply Bill. The Council was also keen to learn from the experience of the north Wales authorities and their dealings with Liverpool over the Lake Vyrnwy scheme.

In September 1891, the *Times* ran an article about the scheme. The unnamed correspondent added 'the super soft Welsh water would save the citizens of Birmingham about £35,000 per annum in the cost of soap alone'. In the same article, Mansergh was quoted as saying 'I have given the matter my most thoughtful consideration and am satisfied that there is no place comparable in its suitability for Birmingham on any English rivers and that you must go over the border into Wales if you are to get a thoroughly satisfactory supply, and that of all the Welsh streams, the Elan and Claerwen are by far the best'.

In October, the *B & R* once more outlined the scheme and reiterated the statement that the Birmingham Corporation was already making preparations to promote the Bill through Parliament to forestall any attempt by London to obtain water from the same source. By this time, the Radnorshire County Council had given its Chairman (Lord Ormathwaite) the power to 'set up a committee to protect the interests of the County in connection with the proposed water scheme as well as empowering it to take whatever steps it felt necessary to join with any other Local Authority to oppose the scheme and employ whatever legal assistance may be necessary'.

As 1891 drew to a close, the *Times* reported that Stuart Rendel (the Liberal MP for Montgomeryshire), responding to a correspondent about the scheme, said 'if the cry of Wales for the Welsh can be justly discredited

it will be interpreting it as meaning such jollies as Welsh water for Wales alone . . . but to start at the present juncture of a Welsh national cry upon the catchword of Welsh water for Welsh use would only be to bring Welsh nationality into ridicule'. Rendel, a wealthy industrialist described by the Welsh historian John Davies as an 'English churchman', was the leader of the Welsh MPs in the Commons and established the Welsh Parliamentary Party. The report added that Sir Henry Hussey (MP for Swansea) felt that there should be careful provision of water 'as the people of Wales may require all the time', while Mr AJ Williams (MP for South Glamorgan) felt that adequate compensation should be given not only to the landowners but also for the benefit 'of the people'. There was also concern about the supply of water to the ever-increasing population of the south Wales valleys, as reservoirs could not be built there due to the extensive mine workings.

In January 1892, a public meeting was held in Rhayader to see what steps could be taken to preserve the usages and rights on Cwmdauddwr Hill and Llanwrthwl. It did not share Stuart Rendel's opinion and the meeting received a letter of support from Frank Edwards, the local Liberal MP. The *B & R* covered the meeting and reported that a Walter Jones from Rhayader summed up the feelings of the group:

the English had been of late been very much for pushing up into gallant little Wales. They sometimes spoke disparagingly of Wales & Welshmen but if they wanted any very precious favour they came to Wales for it. They came to Wales in great measure for their coal . . . and now the English had come and they wanted to get our water into England. A few years ago Liverpool took steps to get a supply from Vyrnwy and now we had the Birmingham Corporation coming to that district and wanting to deprive them not only of their water but of their rights on the Cwmdauddwr Hills.

Mr Vaughan-Vaughan, a local solicitor from Builth, called for compensation as no doubt landowners would receive 'something'. Mr SC Williams, owner of the Bryntirion Estate near Rhayader, was sure that compensation would be paid but he urged the meeting not to do anything that would affect the interests of the landowners 'or that would lessen the price they would get for their land from the Corporation'. In September 1893, the *B & R* was to report the break-up and sale of the Bryntirion Estate. As each property came up for sale, the auctioneer warned prospective buyers that their land could be affected by the laying of the pipeline from the Elan Valley to Birmingham. The house and 858 acres

were sold to Mr Robert Lewis Lloyd, whose family home at Nantgwyllt had been purchased by the Birmingham Corporation, as had been anticipated when the scheme was first announced in March 1891.

The Birmingham Corporation Water Bill was presented to the House of Commons in February 1892 and the debate surrounding the passage of the Bill was reported extensively in the Birmingham newspapers and the *Times*. The Birmingham Ratepayers Association opposed the plan with the complaint that ‘perfectly good Birmingham water was to be stopped in order to bring in soft water, which is rain water, and unpleasant to drink, from Wales, and deprive the people of the beautiful well water which now existed’. But the overriding fear for the objectors from Birmingham was the horror of the debt that the project would incur. Their fears were dismissed with the argument that the possible debt would be offset by the Birmingham City Corporation’s holdings in the public buildings and parks of the city. Their value far outweighed the envisaged debt. As for their ‘perfectly good Birmingham water’, the truth was revealed in a letter to the *Birmingham Daily Mail* in June 1892: ‘Sir, we send by bearer a specimen worm measuring about 10”, which came out of a water tap. Would you like to exhibit it in your window? . . . If you have no use for it, please return by bearer, as we would like to show it to the Water Department Committee’. The Editor commented ‘We have received the monster. The measurement is perfectly correct. As we have no aquarium on the premises, we return it with the suggestion that it be sent to the Zoological Gardens’.

Prior to the second reading of the Bill, a letter appeared in the *Times*, simply signed ‘A Londoner’, which praised Birmingham’s far-sightedness in finding a suitable place to build the dams, thus anticipating the city’s future needs. However, a group of Birmingham manufacturers also succeeded in getting a letter printed on the same page in which they listed a number of complaints about the scheme. Again they complained that the project was not being given proper consideration and they alleged that, although a poll of ratepayers had been undertaken, the Mayor had fixed the result. Again there was the allegation that Birmingham was trying to forestall London’s claim to the same gathering ground. They also claimed that the ‘pure well water’ from Birmingham was far more wholesome than the Welsh water which was the ‘drainage of great grazing areas and huge mountain bogs’. Concern was also expressed that the water would have to be ‘doctored’ and that if it were not ‘doctored it would dissolve the lead in the pipe and that the unhappy ratepayer, after having his pocket depleted, would be the victim of metallic poisoning’. There were also claims that although the soft Welsh water would save money on soap, it

would be detrimental to the dental health of the good people of Birmingham as the soft water would ruin their teeth. These claims were vigorously denied by Sir Thomas Martineau, and the Corporation was no doubt relieved to learn that, when Cardiganshire County Council had discussed the request from Radnorshire to obtain a protection clause in the Bill, a Mr Jones from Taliesin was in favour of Birmingham taking water from Cardigan in exchange for money, while Mr Rees Jones from Tregaron said Birmingham was welcome to the water as Wales had too much of it. The Cardiganshire meeting agreed *not* to cooperate with the Welsh and English local authorities in opposing the scheme.

The second reading of the Bill ran into opposition, mainly because of the question that London might some day determine to get water from Wales and that Birmingham had selected the choicest bit of gathering ground. It was considered to be of such importance that the Bill was submitted to a Hybrid Committee rather than the usual Select Committee. A Hybrid Committee is made up of up to 9 MPs selected by the Commons itself.

In May 1892, the *B & R* carried a short paragraph stating that the preamble to the Birmingham Water Bill had been proved – and that was that as far as the *B & R* was concerned. While the Birmingham papers gave detailed reports of the passage of the Bill nothing more could be found in the Welsh paper. Maybe there were a number of reasons for its silence on the subject. At the time, the *B & R* described itself as ‘the recognised Liberal organ for Breconshire and Radnorshire’; the Bill was sponsored by Joseph Chamberlain (now the Liberal MP for Birmingham) and the Liberals were again fighting a closely contested election in the area. The editor, Edwin Poole, might have been concerned that, as the Liberals had already been split over the Irish question, the Welsh liberals might split over the Birmingham Water Works scheme. However, when the occasion called for it, Poole was not averse to making his politics public:

Breconshire was perhaps the Sleepy Hollow of Wales but Radnorshire ran so closely on its heels for the honour, or otherwise, of wearing the political mantle of Rip Van Winkle but Radnorshire, like Breconshire, is awaking from its long clairvoyant sleep in which it servilely (*sic*) obeyed without political consciousness the behest of the Walshes of Warfield Park, Berks and Eywood, Herefordshire; for the once political autocrats of Radnorshire have not even a residence in the county over which they have so long held undisputed political sway.

(Arthur Walsh, Lord Ormathwaite, was Lord Lieutenant of the County between 1875 and 1895 and Chairman of Radnorshire County Council

from its inception in 1891.) And in 1892 the *B & R* carried a piece under the heading ‘Ejection of Farm Labourers in Radnorshire’ which reported the case of Richard Jukes and Edward Moore, two farm labourers sacked by their employer when they admitted voting for the Liberal candidate.

But back to the Birmingham Water Scheme! On the whole Birmingham had answered many of the objections to the scheme but they had failed to silence the Reverend Nares from Kerry, who continued to protest about the sale of Welsh water to the English. Mr Nares argued that a principled stand against such a sell-out would attract business to the Principality. He was also far-sighted enough to argue that electricity would become the motive power of the future and that Wales had the natural facilities in water for its generation. As such, Mr Nares argued, the Welsh should combine to protect their water supplies. However, this appeal met with no response and the *B & R* continued, ‘Welsh landowners would be very glad to negotiate with other rich bodies for the sales of the surplus water with which Wales is blessed so abundantly’. In 1894, Mansergh, commenting about the construction of the aqueduct to carry the water to Birmingham, wrote ‘There was no serious opposition, landowners being well enough aware nowadays that they have little chance to stop a great and useful scheme of this character, and that their prudent policy is to acquiesce, with the chance of bleeding the promoters heavily for interfering with their property. Experience is showing that in this process they are perhaps more than fairly proficient’.

THE BUILDING PHASE AND AFTERMATH

Work began on building the Elan Valley railway in September 1893 with 150 men. A local entrepreneur began construction of what he hoped would be a pub for the workers but the Water Committee stepped in to persuade the magistrates to refuse the drinks licence. The building ultimately became the Elan Valley Hotel and it was reported that in Rhayader trade was brisk.

The Chief Constable reported his concern about the number of workmen arriving in the area and he requested permission to employ extra constables. One Alderman complained that the police were not active enough, but the biggest source of complaint was the amount of drinking that was happening in Newbridge-on-Wye on Sundays. (Bear in mind that the Welsh Sunday Closing Act had been passed in 1881.) The Chief Constable proposed that the Radnorshire and Brecon constabulary should be sworn in both counties to make policing more efficient. However, Radnorshire County Council blocked this move as it was felt that

Brecknockshire County Council should have made a contribution to Radnorshire's legal costs in opposing the Bill. It would take until 1894 before the two County Councils agreed to the joint swearing of constables.

In February 1893 the *B & R* carried an article headed 'Colonizing in Radnorshire': 'The Corporation will have to act as though it were founding a colony, providing everything except food and clothing for the thousand inhabitants, about 500 of whom will be persons engaged in the work'.

The facilities provided by Birmingham became legendary: Elan Village was built especially for the workforce and set a new standard for such an enterprise. Different types of accommodation were provided for single men and for married men who were accompanied by their families. There were running water, electric light, sanitation and a school that provided primary education up the age of eleven years old, when the boys were expected to join their fathers in the construction work. The wives in the village won the contract from Birmingham to provide laundry facilities and a hospital was provided to care for the sick and injured. There was also an isolation hospital – the only one in the district – for anyone from the village who contracted any of the contagious diseases that were almost endemic in the area. These included smallpox, whooping cough, typhoid and scarlet fever. This was in stark contrast to the local health provision: for example, Dr Gordon Richardson, the local Medical Officer of Health in Rhayader, reported that he had no idea that there was an outbreak of scarlet fever in St Harmon until several weeks after it had started. The facilities provided for the workforce earned the admiration of Dr Richardson. He compared the abundant supply of clean water and what he described as 'the most perfect system of sewerage' to the number of open drains running across the roads in Cwmdauddwr, where 'along these gutters all dirty water etc runs down to the river'.

The social side of life in the valley was taken care of with lantern-slide lectures, amateur dramatics, concerts, a brass band, several temperance groups and literacy lessons. There was a single entry and exit point to the village that was strictly controlled and the purchase of alcohol was also subject to strict rules. The Water Committee were all committed teetotallers but were realistic enough to realise that the navvies would spend their evenings relaxing over a beer or two, so they provided a canteen where the men could drink under strictly controlled conditions. In the event of a workman being killed, his family was compensated with the payment of three months' wages.

Back in Birmingham, the Ratepayers Association still persisted in its campaign against the scheme, this time making allegations of malpractice by members of the Corporation and Water Committee and insinuating that

they all had their price. It was alleged that the Welsh Water scheme would not bear investigation by an independent and impartial tribunal and other allegations included improper payment of compensation ‘for an estate valued at £40,000 for which £140,000 was paid’, together with claims that Mansergh’s fee of £175,000 had been agreed without the knowledge of the full Water Committee.

An inquiry was demanded at which the witnesses would be indemnified. Although the Mayor was willing to hold such an inquiry he refused indemnification on the grounds that anyone found not to be telling the truth would have to face the consequences. In the event, the whole affair was resolved by an exchange of letters in the press.

Once the project had begun in earnest, the Welsh papers turned their attention to reports of the occasional accidents that took place at the construction site and reports of navvies being arrested for being drunk and disorderly in Rhayader.

In 1899, the Chief Constable, Fullerton Jones, was asked to comment on how the crime statistics might have been affected by the arrival of the navvies. Fullerton Jones compared the statistics to those of 1893, the year before the navvies arrived. He explained that the number of navvies convicted of crime in 1898 far exceeded the total number of people convicted of crime in the whole county in 1893, which was the year when the navvies started to arrive. He added – rather in the tone of a colonial administrator – that ‘many natives have been led into crime by navvies seems also beyond dispute’.

By 1904, the dams were virtually completed and ready for their official opening by King Edward VII and Queen Alexandra. The Birmingham press began a campaign of raising civic pride in the project and heaped congratulations on the Corporation for its foresight and daring. Papers published artists’ impressions of water flowing over the top of the dams under the headline ‘Birmingham’s Niagaras’.

By now there was a new mid Wales newspaper – the *Radnorshire Standard and Llandrindod Wells Gazette* – which duly published the arrangements for the forthcoming visit of the King and Queen to Rhayader. It revealed in its edition of 22 June 1904 that at a meeting of the Rhayader Parish Council it was proposed that a recommendation be made to the Rural District Council to levy a rate to defray the cost of decorating the town of Rhayader for the occasion. It was, we are told, outvoted and the Council broke up without having done anything towards the celebration of the forthcoming event.

In July, the *Birmingham Evening Dispatch* noted that 1000 seats had been made available at Rhayader in order for people to see the Royal

party. The seats and parking were free but that only 400 tickets had been allocated was blamed on the Water Committee's failure to advertise them.

The dams were officially opened on 21 July 1904 and the Birmingham papers celebrated their civic pride in this massive feat of Victorian engineering with many pages covering the history of the scheme, and with portraits of the principal members of the Birmingham Water Committee and the engineers. However, only Alderman Hallewell Rogers, the Mayor of Birmingham from 1902, was honoured by the King with a knighthood. None of the engineers received any recognition for their expertise and work.

The *Radnorshire Standard and Llandrindod Wells Gazette* also covered the opening of the dams in its edition of 27 July. The paper said that they would not be printing any photos but promised a souvenir edition 'should there be sufficient interest'. The author could not find a copy of the souvenir.

CONCLUSION

So why does there appear to have been so little in the way of organised opposition in mid Wales?

There are a number of factors which have to be taken into consideration: the ongoing, intense political rivalry between the Tories and the Liberals, the question of tithe payments, the Land Commission and above all the question of the disestablishment of the Church of England dominated the press. The church versus chapel debate was particularly vitriolic. The population that remained in Radnorshire was scattered and in small communities. Those who did remain were often treated with contempt by those in authority: consider the use of the word 'natives' by Fullerton Jones, for example. The landowners, often in considerable financial difficulties themselves, were only too anxious to off-load their burdensome estates and sell to the Birmingham Corporation. The Welsh MPs had other things on their minds beside who should obtain the water in mid Wales. However, lessons about lobbying had been learnt. In January 1899, the *Radnorshire Standard and Llandrindod Wells Gazette* reported that a special train had been laid on to take Welsh objectors to London when the London County Council once more raised the idea of building further reservoirs in mid Wales. The Welsh were not prepared to have mid Wales turned into a series of artificial lakes to provide water for England as the south Wales valleys had been turned into vast coalfields.

What is clear is that the very powerful Birmingham Corporation was determined to take whatever action was necessary in order to obtain the

best gathering grounds, regardless of the cost to the local population. Glasgow had solved its water problems by utilising water from Loch Katrine; Manchester had built the reservoirs at Thirlmere; Liverpool had created the scheme at Lake Vyrnwy and Birmingham's civic pride demanded something equally spectacular in order to hold up its corporate head among its rival cities.

It was also clear that Birmingham was very well aware of London's plans and it had the financial ability and strength of purpose to carry the scheme through at the earliest opportunity. Although the Corporation regretted that 'the construction of the works in the Elan Valley occasioned the destruction of the residences of Cwm Elan and Nantgwyllt', no mention was ever made of the destruction of a whole community and its history, or the tenant farmers and household staff who lost their livelihoods and homes as a result of the flooding. Some may have found interim work on the dams but others had been forced to leave the valley, or even Wales, as a result of Birmingham's initiative. Robert Lewis Lloyd, owner of Nantgwyllt, objected to the compulsory purchase of his estate, saying '... it is unfair and unjust that he should be subjected to the confiscation of his property for the benefit of a distant town'; but he was, at least, compensated, unlike the tenants!

Maybe the Welsh realised that, whatever their protests, or even if the Birmingham Bill had been defeated, the dams would still have been built. The question was whether the water would go to Birmingham or London. Of course, it has to be remembered that there was no planning process to be followed at this time. Individuals or corporations with influence and power would simply have their local MP sponsor a bill to enable them to push through their particular scheme.

The Birmingham Corporation completed the series of dams with the opening of the Claerwen Reservoir in 1952. With the rise of a more confident Welsh nationalism, the Liverpool scheme to build a reservoir in the Tryweryn Valley in 1957 met with massive opposition when, once more, a powerful corporation felt there was no need to consult the local authorities, let alone the wishes of the Welsh people. Despite Welsh protests, the dam was built and yet another village drowned. The Tryweryn Reservoir was officially opened on 28 October 1965. Five days earlier, the *Daily Mail* published a cartoon by Illingworth which illustrated how little had changed in the seventy-five years since the Birmingham Corporation decided to build the Elan Valley dams. The cartoon shows two Welsh farmers trudging along in torrential rain, accompanied by a very sad, soaked sheep. One farmer is carrying a placard on which is written 'Stop Stealing Welsh Water'.

Those protests were not necessarily about using Welsh water in English cities. They were more about the destruction of a community, its history and its language and the arrogant disregard of the wishes of the local people; and their origins lay in the tentative Welsh protests at the building of the Elan Valley dams.

NOTE

This article is based on the dissertation I wrote for my BA (Hons) for Exeter University, looking at how the building of the Elan Valley dams was reported in the press, both nationally and locally in Birmingham and mid Wales.

‘IN PERIL ON THE SEA’: THE CAPTIVITY EXPERIENCES OF TWO EARLY MODERN RADNORSHIRE MIGRANTS

Hilary Lloyd Yewlett

In her ground-breaking volume on the experience of captivity endured by eighteenth-century British sea-voyagers, famous and obscure alike, Linda Colley confessed that she would be astonished ‘if there did not still await discovery in libraries and archives throughout the world, more printed examples of Welshmen and women (among others) who underwent captivity in the Mediterranean region’.¹ Maintaining that ‘people and stories matter’, she claimed that her ‘intention in mining captives’ own extraordinarily rich and unexplored writings was to supply work both of individual recovery and of imperial revision.² Leaving the issue of imperial revision in Professor Colley’s expert hands, this writer presents here an analysis of two rare Welsh, and hitherto unexplored, captivity narratives of two Radnorshire men born and raised in the county in the early eighteenth century.

The journal of Howell ap David Price (c.1707–1768) can be found in the National Library of Wales at Aberystwyth and is also accessible for National Library Athenscard members, via *Eighteenth Century Collections Online* (ECCO). Born in the parish of Llandegley, Price tells in his journal of his capture by both French privateers and Barbary pirates.³ John Griffith (1713–1776) of Nantmel, a nearby parish in the same county, was also captured by privateers, though he was not confined for as long as Price. His journal, published in 1779, twenty-seven years after Price’s, is also in the National Library. It too can be accessed via ECCO.⁴ However, for Ffrancis Payne, the celebrated twentieth-century chronicler of Radnorshire, the experience of reading Griffith’s journal was not an enjoyable one. Payne commented, ‘I felt it my duty to read it, but I have never read so dry, and to me, so unprofitable a book’.⁵ He did not then value the fact that Griffith’s account, like Price’s, is, in part, a Welsh example of what Colley described as

... captivity narratives ... substantial accounts usually written in the first person ... by a one-time captive ... A mode of writing rather than a genre, captivity narratives commonly describe how a single individual or a group was seized, how the victim/s coped (or not) with the challenges and sufferings that ensued, and how they contrived in the end to escape or were ransomed or released.⁶

Although Griffith and Price were near contemporaries, raised until adolescence in isolated mid Wales, their life histories could not have been more different. Both younger sons, they shared a farming background but, whereas religion did not figure largely in Price's upbringing, Griffith's parents were devout Quakers. When Griffith was thirteen, he persuaded his father to allow him to emigrate to Pennsylvania. Relatives had already settled there and had written encouraging their emigration. After receiving 'a very pleasing account of that country' from a friend who had lived in Pennsylvania, John and his older brother, Thomas, embarked from Milford Haven for Philadelphia in 1726. All the passengers, including three newly born babies, survived the eight weeks' voyage.⁷ Griffith was later to become a Quaker minister in Pennsylvania.

Howell Price went to sea because Rice, his elder brother, stood to inherit their impecunious father's smallholding, but his first voyage as a merchantman turned out to be his last. His journal, published in London in 1752, in his old age, may have been produced with an eye to English readers, for he portrayed his father as a stereotypical Welshman who, although impoverished, was immensely proud of the family's lengthy pedigree. The practice, for legal purposes, of demonstrating one's ancient lineage had long become obsolete since Wales's assimilation by England, yet Howell's father would not countenance his son being apprenticed to one of his Hereford brothers-in-law, declaring, 'the moment you attach yourself to the servile art of commerce, I shall strike you out of my Pedigree as unworthy of a place with my forefathers'.⁸ It was not uncommon to find in the literature of the time '... ironic comparisons of the allegedly idyllic rural life with the supposedly synthetic, moneyed world of early eighteenth century commercialism.'⁹

Howell's reaction to his father's obsession was forthright: '... my father ... had been more exact in preserving the genealogy of his family than with preserving my mother or her children from starving'.¹⁰ Price senior's overweening pride in his bloodline was a cause of wry amusement for Howell and his English mother, given the poverty they endured, which Howell described with the adroit humour pervading all his well-crafted writing: 'a piece of meat was an elegancy we had never been accustomed to, till an old Yew (*sic*) was grown past bearing, when to prevent a natural, she underwent an artificial death'.¹¹

After surviving a severe beating from his father for showing disrespect, the sixteen-year-old Howell unsuccessfully sought to obtain a Naval ship favoured by Price senior. Thus he seized the chance to become a better paid merchant seaman aboard *The Twin Brothers*. She was bound not only for Smyrna, then a vital Mediterranean port for the shipping of goods from

the east through to Europe, but also for Scanderoon, described in the early nineteenth century as ‘the gate of Asia, with a harbour the best on the coast’, though it was an unhealthy place.¹²

Howell Price’s apprenticeship was timely: as Rodger noted, ‘seafaring was a young man’s trade; few started later than fifteen or sixteen’.¹³ He would have been literate and numerate too for ‘skill in mathematics was the essential qualification for any ambitious boy who hoped to advance either in merchantmen or men-of-war’.¹⁴ His career as a sailor was short-lived however for, after what is probably one of the most graphic accounts of seasickness ever written in English, he described the capture of his first ship by French privateers. John Griffith underwent a similar ordeal after embarking on 1 October 1747, at Chester, Pennsylvania, on a ship bound for England. Such capture was a risk all eighteenth-century sea-voyagers took for, while English Admiralty law defined a privateer as a ‘privately owned but publicly licensed warship cruising against the enemy in time of war’, Rodger highlighted the distinction between ‘full-time privateers cruising in the hope of taking prizes, and armed long-distance merchantmen who were prepared for any windfall profits that chance might put their way’.¹⁵

Griffith’s account of being taken by French privateers vividly demonstrates the hazards – both natural and man-made – attendant upon such voyages at that time. A month after he had left Pennsylvania, his ship ran into very rough seas: ‘. . . the motion of the waves was so violent, that though she was a strong new ship, she was beat upon with so much force, as to make her crack from end to end in a shocking manner, as if she would have broken in pieces’.¹⁶

Sustained by his Quaker faith during that savage storm – ‘. . . if the mighty Ruler of the sea and land . . . had been pleased to withdraw his protection, there was only about a two-inch plank between us and eternity’¹⁷ – Griffith and his fellow Quaker, Thomas Gawthorp, faced further peril, for Gawthorp had caught sight of a threatening sail to the windward of their own vessel. Both men, having already acquired some experience in handling the ship, offered their captain assistance:

We urged him to put out all the sail he could crowd, and to exert his utmost endeavour to escape, offering to assist all in our power, as we had often done before being very poorly manned; in part owing to the sailors’ unwillingness to go into ships bound for London, lest they be pressed on board men of war.¹⁸

Impressment was something sailors studiously avoided, for this often entailed them being carried away by force, without wages. In the mid-seventeenth century, Samuel Pepys, as secretary to the Admiralty, had taken up their cause:

July 1st 1666 (Sunday) . . . To the Tower, several times about the business of the pressed men . . . to see poor patient labouring men . . . taken upon a sudden by strangers, was very hard and that without press-money, but forced against all law to be gone. It is a great tyranny.¹⁹

The problem of the undermanning of ships must have contributed in no small measure to the ease with which some of them were taken by privateers.

Because Griffith's captain 'would not be prevailed upon to have a reef taken out of the main sail', their ship was taken after a nine-hour chase, 'about eighty leagues from Cape Clear in Ireland and one hundred and twenty-five leagues from the Land's End of England', by a snow privateer under the command of Captain Peter Garalon.²⁰ She was carrying ten carriage guns and about one hundred men. The French declared that their English prize had been badly steered by its captain, who may have been inexperienced, for it was not until 1845 that the British Board of Trade authorised a system of voluntary examinations of competency for men intending to become masters of foreign-going merchant ships. The greater seamanship of the French was lauded by Griffith: ' . . . after they had got possession of our ship, they put her in a fine trim for sailing, so that it was plain she could outsail the privateer that took her by much'.²¹ Griffith also admired Andrew de St Andrew, the snow's second-in-command, for he noted not only this Frenchman's capacity to speak good English but also his respectful treatment of his captives.²² Later close encounters with the French would change his opinion of the majority of them.

The stormy weather continued, so it was more than two weeks after their capture before Griffith and his fellow Quakers made landfall. During that time the French privateers, skilful steersmen that they were, were themselves chased by a privateer carrying twenty carriage guns and three hundred men. During the late seventeenth century, the privateers' home port of St Malo had been known as a powerful privateering base. Colley noted that

It is unlikely that all the Barbary powers put together captured more English, Welsh, Scottish and Irish vessels over the centuries than did French privateers operating out of the single port of St Malo who seized 2,000 British ships between 1688 and 1713 alone.²³

On 26 November 1747, two months after his departure from Pennsylvania, Griffith’s ship finally docked near the Spanish coastal town of San Sebastian, much to his relief:

We poor captives went on shore in the morning, being glad and thankful to have the opportunity of setting our feet again on firm land, although in an enemy’s country; for, setting aside the great affliction of being taken by an enemy, it had been an exceeding rough boisterous trying passage, of about eight weeks.²⁴

They had only three days to enjoy the mild, spring-like weather that characterised San Sebastian’s winter that year, before being escorted thirty miles on horseback by the ship’s doctor to the south-west French town of Bayonne. Stopping en route for a much-appreciated supper in St Jean de Luz, Griffith, ever the Quaker minister, was not so approving of the attention afforded to them by the ‘*filles de joie*’ who frequented the port:

I was not at all pleased with the forward wanton carriage of the women; such as I had never seen before: I reproved them, but some, by way of excuse, said the principal thing they intended thereby, was to cheer up our spirits, in our captivated state; yet I could hardly believe their design was so innocent.²⁵

Colley contended that ‘virtually all British captives were compelled by the nature of their predicament to re-examine . . . conventional wisdoms about nationality, race, religion . . . and appropriate modes of behaviour . . .’²⁶ During Griffith’s relatively short incarceration, however, he remained entrenched in his disapproval of foreigners:

I never knew any people so thoroughly furnished with artful ways to get money as the French. Their tongues were very much at command, and they could use them with great wit and address, in order to gain our good opinion of them, but I never perceived they meant anything else in the main, thereby, but advantage to themselves . . .²⁷

While he bemoaned their uncomfortable quarters in the castle at Bayonne, it was idolatry, as he saw it, which offended Griffith most of all. He regarded penitents at St Leon’s Well as being superstitious and idolatrous and drew back, affronted, from kissing a crucifix. A similar incident was to disturb him in Spain, when he was awaiting his return passage to England.

After a couple of weeks, Griffith and his fellow Quakers were moved upriver to Dax. The boat journey did nothing to improve his opinion of the other passengers:

... we went thither by water and were in the boat all night, having very disagreeable company, the worst of whom were English and Scotch . . . we bore their filthy and obscene discourse for some time . . . but we being on truth's side, which is strongest of all, they were soon overcome and silenced.²⁸

Clearly, the life which Griffith had spent as a Quaker minister had ill-prepared him for a more secular world.

Their sojourn in Dax was more to Griffith's liking for it enabled him to explore the town with its ancient hot springs and to observe, at close quarters, Catholic worship. This activity drew from him a less than temperate response:

Their clergy, of various orders, swarm like locusts, who fleece the people to that degree, that it may be truly said, of much the greater part, they are in a state of abject poverty and vassalage; stupidly devoted to follow their blind guides, whithersoever they think proper to lead them, not daring to judge for themselves at all in matters of religion.²⁹

For a man who 'never remembered to have sworn an oath or to have uttered a curse', this was strong language.³⁰ Undoubtedly, Griffith believed that the best practice of Christianity was Quakerism – a practice which offended Catholic priests in their turn, when he failed to remove his hat in a church he was visiting.³¹

Towards the end of December, Griffith and Gawthorp learned that an English ship which would be able to take them to England had arrived at Port Passage. On 24 December, not a day for religious observance by Quakers, they once more took a boat for Bayonne. From there they continued, initially to St Jean de Luz and then to San Sebastian, where they had first landed. There they waited several weeks for their English ship to make ready to sail home.

Griffith was even more uncharitable in his opinion of Spaniards than he was of Frenchmen:

The men appeared to us in a general way, poor, proud, and exceeding lazy; filled with high conceits of themselves, both in a civil and a religious sense. They sauntered about, walking with their cloaks over

their shoulders, looking upon us with contempt, as we could neither bow to their pride nor to their religion; nor could we look upon them with a favourable light, when we observed what slaves they made of their wives, and of the women in general, who are employed in all or most of the drudgery, even in rowing their boats.³²

He considered that ‘the darkness of popery’ seemed greater in Spain than it was in France ‘. . . although it may be felt there beyond all expressions’.³³ His affront at being asked by a servant to kiss a cross in the house where he was boarding led to him being waylaid in a passage by two men, one of whom

came slyly behind my back, laying fast of both my arms in order to confine me whilst the other brought the image up to my face; intending, no doubt, to force me into that which I could not force myself voluntarily into. I soon perceived what they were about, and presently freed myself from their (to me) very odious design . . .³⁴

Griffith was in a dark humour during his Spanish stay, for his mood had been affected by what he saw as the promotion of Catholic error, so far removed from his own endorsement of Quaker truth. Not for Griffith the burning of incense, the invocation of the saints, nor the infallibility of the pope; he regarded these as barriers rather than aids to belief and it was some time after his return before his depression lifted.³⁵ Finally, on 26 January 1748, three eventful months after he had left Pennsylvania, his ship landed in Torbay, where Griffith was able to step onto British soil once more.

It was to be more than seven years before the young Howell ap David Price was to see Wales again, for hardly had *The Twin Brothers* been taken by a French privateer, just off the Straits of Gibraltar, than it was recaptured by an Algerian corsair. Colley affirmed that ‘. . . before 1750 . . . in this Mediterranean zone, it was Britons who were for a long time at risk of being captured and enslaved by Muslim powers and not the other way round’.³⁶

Price’s ship was a nimble craft so, on sighting the privateer, its crew ‘crowded all the sail they possibly could and ran for it.’ However, the French ship outmanoeuvred them at every turn. Price recalled,

. . . [she] no sooner collected (from our speed and management) what we would be at, than she ran athwart our way, lying before us. We then shaped our course south-west, more to sea-ward; she veered again and

observed us; when imagining that our wind would have carried us to the mouth of the Straits before she could have come up, we made another push, but the wind shifted somewhat westerly, she clapped in just before us and poured in a broadside which raked us fore and aft . . .³⁷

Having only sixteen hands to the French's fifty-two, Price's ship was easily captured. Nine of the French crew were ordered onto Price's vessel and commanded to return with their prisoners to the Bay of Biscay. The privateer, meanwhile, continued on its cruise to Madeira. However, scarcely six hours after they had parted from her, Price's ship was re-taken by an Algerian corsair, a fate which could have been avoided, the Algerians maintained, had not the French removed the English colours on *The Twin Brothers* and hoisted their own, for England was then at peace with Algeria.³⁸ Nevertheless, Davies calculated that ' . . . between 1530 and 1780, there were almost certainly a million and quite possibly as many as a million and a quarter white, European Christians enslaved by Muslims of the Barbary coast'.³⁹

When slaves were landed at Algiers, then the most important centre of Ottoman power in the Mahgreb, they were marched to the Bassa's [military commander's] palace, where he selected the number which according to law belonged to him; the rest were sold in the market to the highest bidder. The price a slave commanded was based on how much relatives would pay to ransom him. If the slave was male, his profession also influenced the price. A list of those ransomed from Algiers in 1694 included carpenters, gunsmiths, coopers, sailmakers, surgeons, sailors, traders, fishermen and priests.⁴⁰

Muslim masters would occasionally allow their slaves to redeem themselves by professing Islam, and several attempts were made to make Price a 'Mahometan', but he 'withstood them all'.⁴¹ Marginally less unfortunate than his fellow captives, Price was drafted into the Bassa's service where, he recalled, 'for want of knowledge in any particular science I was put to carry burthens and other laborious employment; in which exercise I wore out the first sixteen months of my servitude'.⁴² His conditions improved when he was given charge of a few sheep which had been presented to the Bassa. Price had already apprised his master of his abilities as a shepherd, so he was given responsibility for the animals, including their breeding programme. It was not an onerous task, and it gave him a certain freedom for he ' . . . was no longer shut up on nights, but had the wilds and pastures to range in . . .' He welcomed this, for 'so long as my Care were but safe and in good condition I had no further account to give of my time to anyone'.⁴³

As a private slave, Price was better treated than most and even more good fortune was to come his way when he was put to work in the Bassa’s *masserie*, a fortified farmhouse ‘about three leagues’ from Algiers. Davies observed that private slaves were typically put to work in such places.⁴⁴ During his frequent visits to Price, the Bassa commended him on his care of the small flock, which by the second summer had grown somewhat with seven lambs having been born to four sheep. Price was handsomely rewarded for his skilful shepherding.⁴⁵ Nevertheless, he remained a slave.

His condition caused him to reflect on the nature of freedom. Not mature enough to recognize that freedom is the right to choose one’s own bonds, he began to compare his own situation with his father’s back in Wales:

. . . why should I for whose single preservation and commodity twice the whole income of my father’s estate is expended, be so miserable here, in the very same exercise and employment as he is, when he is so happy with half my present allowance for the support of himself and his family?⁴⁶

Nevertheless, Price did not miss his homeland: ‘. . . I never once cast a desire thither since I left it’.⁴⁷ He pined only for his lack of liberty so, when after two years of imprisonment he discovered that a beautiful young woman was also imprisoned by the Bassa, the young swain resolved to escape with her.

Citing only two examples, one French, one Italian, known to him of cross-country escapes, Davies pointed out that ‘some slaves escaped by stealing a boat . . . or with much more difficulty, evading local Berber tribesmen and getting away overland’.⁴⁸ Price’s story of his five-year adventures across North Africa with Cleone, a rich heiress, is told with a picaresque quality worthy of Fielding’s *Tom Jones*. During their series of hazardous journeys, Cleone lost some of her precious jewellery and assumed a new gender and a new name, ‘Toma’. In this guise she became prey to the unwanted attentions of Zenora, the wife of Miguel, under whose caravan’s protection they travelled across the Arabian desert until they reached Grand Cairo. From there, they underwent a succession of death-defying adventures before arriving in Mecca. From Mecca they took a ship down to Cape Cormandel on the southern tip of India, where Price was washed overboard while the vessel, with Cleone aboard, was shipwrecked. After a further chain of heart-stopping escapades, when Price was shot and left for dead at the Cape of Good Hope, the young couple despaired of ever seeing each other again. Reunited in Rotterdam,

they returned to London where, when Cleone had claimed her father's estate, they were married.

Despite its 'ripping yarn' qualities, there is an immediacy about some of Price's narrative that leaves the reader in little doubt as to its veracity:

We stayed in and about Cairo for three months . . . we were daily seeking out for one of the best means we possibly could procure of arriving safe in England, for we dreaded as Death to pass down the Mediterranean lest we should be obliged to pay another visit to Algiers or the Barbary Coast towns, from whence we had little inclination for attempting another escape.⁴⁹

Nevertheless, many details of Price's colourful exploits cannot be corroborated by reference to contemporary historical sources for, as Colley maintained,

. . . it was impossible for captivity narrators to prove the truth of all the experiences they had laid claim to. The events in question had taken place too far away, amongst people who were unlikely ever to be available as witnesses and whose perspective on what had happened would have been different.⁵⁰

Price eventually returned home to Llandegley in some style. He and his new wife were greeted joyfully in the neighbourhood, where Price claimed that his parents then occupied '. . . a small hovel covered with thatch, coated with loam and glazed over with paper'.⁵¹ Such housing conditions were not uncommon in parts of Radnorshire, given the rural poverty of much of eighteenth-century mid Wales. However, this description contrasts sharply with Price senior's grand illusions about his ancestry and his earlier ambitions for his younger son.

It was the 'prodigal son' rather than his father who supplied ample provisions for their guests, in whose conversation Price found 'such a charm, half Welsh, half English and some showing out a mongrel tongue between them both'.⁵² Eventually, he persuaded his father to allow his older brother, Rice, to return with him to London. There, Rice became a successful merchant, able to provide a home for his elderly parents, who left Llandegley to end their days in London with their sons. Between 1750 and 1800, the catalogue of probated wills in the National Archives at Kew lists only one David Price, gentleman of the city of London, and Rice Price, grocer of Bow Lane. An examination of their wills (proved 1768, 1766) did not reveal any evidence of the testators' relationship with author Price or his brother.

John Griffith too ended his days near London. He was interred in the Friends' burial-ground in Chelmsford, Essex. His American journeys had taken him along the eastern seaboard of the United States, to New England, New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania and Maryland. His journal reveals his increasing concern at the gradual decline of Quakerism there. He was equally concerned by the state of Quakerism in Radnorshire, for when, after an absence of twenty-two years, he visited his mother, brother and sisters in Nantmel, he ‘... found things very low as to Friends, which was a cause of sorrow to my mind’.⁵³ On the third occasion when he went home, his welcome in Llandegley was as warm as Price’s had been in different circumstances, for then he attended the Pales Meeting House, where ‘the neighbours being apprized of my being come, flocked to the meeting in abundance’.⁵⁴ Established in 1717, the Pales is the oldest Friends’ Meeting House in continuous use in Wales. Griffith would have known it as a child, even though on first emigrating to Pennsylvania he carried a letter from Talcoed meeting, close to his mother’s home.

It was Brook’s claim that, ‘in the fight for Imperial domination of the high seas’ by explorers, pirates and merchantmen, ‘... the local and the transnational became interconnected’ and, inevitably, ‘... a process of “transculturation” gradually took place in which everyone changed slightly as a result of their encounter with everyone else’.⁵⁵ For Griffith and Price, like so many other Welshmen since their day, this change resulted in their turning their backs forever on their homeland of Wales to live out the rest of their lives in England.

NOTES

¹ L. Colley, *Captives*, (New York, 2002), p. 13.

² Colley, p. 3.

³ Howell ap David Price, *A genuine account of the life and transactions of Howell ap David Price, gentleman of Wales*, (London, 1752).

⁴ JA Griffith, *The Journal of John Griffith*, (London, 1779).

⁵ F. Payne, ‘Exploring Radnorshire’ translated from the Welsh by Dafydd y Garth, Part Two, *The Transaction of the Radnorshire Society*, Vol. LXXIX, (2009), p. 40.

⁶ Colley, p. 13.

⁷ Griffith, p. 6.

⁸ Price, p. 6.

⁹ P. Langford, *Eighteenth Century Britain: A Very Short Introduction*, (Oxford, 2000), p. 21.

¹⁰ Price, p. 3.

¹¹ Price, p. 5.

¹² D. E. Lee, ‘A memorandum concerning Cyrus 1878’, *The Journal of Modern History*, 3, 2, (1931).

¹³ N. Rodger, *The Command of the Ocean: a Naval History of Britain 1649–1815*, (London, 2004), p. 212.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Rodger, p. 156.

¹⁶ Griffith, p. 74.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Griffith, p. 75.

¹⁹ S. Pepys, *Diary Selections*, (Marshall Cavendish, 1988), pp. 173-4.

²⁰ A ‘snow’ was a merchant ship, distinguished from a brig by having an extra small mast called atrysail, fitted abaft the main lower mast. It was a favourite vessel of privateers.

²¹ Griffith, p. 79.

²² Griffith, p. 77.

²³ Colley, p. 46.

²⁴ Griffith, p. 81.

²⁵ Griffith, p. 82.

²⁶ Colley, p. 16.

²⁷ Griffith, p. 82.

²⁸ Griffith, p. 84.

²⁹ Griffith, p. 87.

³⁰ Griffith, p. 8.

³¹ Griffith, p. 89.

³² Griffith, p. 93.

³³ Griffith, p. 96.

³⁴ Griffith, p. 97.

³⁵ Griffith, p. 92.

³⁶ Colley, p. 103.

³⁷ Price, p. 12.

³⁸ Price, p. 14.

³⁹ R.C. Davies, ‘Counting European slaves on the Barbary Coast,’ *Past and Present*, 172, (2001), p. 118.

⁴⁰ C. Vallar, *Pirates and Privateers, the history of maritime policy* (Keller, Texas, 2004), <http://www.cindyvallar.com/BCaptives.html>, last accessed 2 August 2008.

⁴¹ Price, p. 19.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Price, p. 20.

⁴⁴ Davies, p. 109.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Price, p. 21.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Davies, p. 113.

⁴⁹ Price, p. 148.

⁵⁰ Colley, p. 91.

⁵¹ Price, p. 257.

⁵² Price, p. 265.

⁵³ Griffith, p. 106.

⁵⁴ Griffith, p. 223.

⁵⁵ T. Brook, *Vermeer’s Hat: The Seventeenth Century and the Dawn of the Global World*, (London, 2008), p. 7.

THE RADNORSHIRE QUARTER SESSIONS, 1773–1873

Anna Page

This article will discuss the court system established by Henry VIII after the Acts of Union, the courts in Radnorshire, and the survival and physical condition of the Quarter Session records for Radnorshire. Examples of the business of each session for the three years studied will then be given, followed by an extract from the conclusions reached during the study.¹

The main purpose of the research was to examine the records of the Radnorshire Quarter Sessions for a ‘generous century’ before the establishment of the County Councils from 1889. In order to identify significant changes in emphasis of the business of the sessions over this period, it was decided that three sample years should be studied, with an interval of fifty years between them. The sample years would need to be adjusted to find three at fifty-year intervals for which all four Sessions Rolls survived, as well as the Order Books.² The first surviving Order Book starts at 1771 and the first year after that for which all four rolls survive is 1773; they also survive for 1823 and 1873, as do the Order Books, so these years became the subject of the study.

Before a thematic analysis could be carried out, the contents of the Sessions Rolls and Order Books for the three years chosen for study were calendared. All the data recorded, which amounts to over two hundred pages, were presented in Appendices A–C of the study. It is from these that the examples given in this article will be taken.

THE COURT SYSTEM ESTABLISHED BY ACTS OF UNION

After his split with Rome, Henry VIII wished to limit the powers of the Marcher Lords, many of whom were Catholic, and might thus give aid to his enemies in France and Spain; many were also considered to be too powerful. Criminals from England were known to have been harboured in the Marches in return for money. Henry decided to govern Wales in the same way that he governed England, by appointing Justices of the Peace from amongst the gentry in each county, who under the guidance of the Lords Lieutenant, the King’s representatives in the county, would ensure that the administration of justice, as well as civil administration, would conform to the pattern already established in England.

There is debate as to whether there were Justices of the Peace in Wales before the reign of Henry VIII, some historians asserting that the office

was established under an act of Edward III.³ The more common assertion is that it was introduced by one of the Acts of Union; in fact it was the act of 27 Henry VIII, c.5 in 1535 which saw the provision for their appointment, in the crown lands at least. The first Act of Union (27 Henry VIII, c.26) in 1536 set up the courts of Quarter and Great Sessions in the crown lands. The second act (34–35 Henry VIII, c.26) in 1543⁴ divided the parts of Wales which had formerly been under the control of the Marcher lordships into the new counties of Pembrokeshire, Glamorgan, Montgomeryshire, Denbighshire, Radnorshire, Breconshire and Monmouthshire. This act also finalised the setting up the court system, to mirror that in England: the Great Sessions, the higher court, were the equivalent of the English Assizes. The lower courts were the General Sessions of the Peace, more commonly called the Quarter Sessions, because they were held four times a year at three-monthly intervals.

For the Great Sessions, Wales was divided into circuits: North Wales (Caernarfon, Merioneth and Anglesey), Brecon (Brecon, Glamorgan and Radnor), Carmarthen (Carmarthenshire, Cardigan and Pembroke) and Chester (Denbigh, Flint and Montgomery); Monmouth formed part of the Oxford circuit. At first, there was one judge per circuit, but another was added in 1575. The Great Sessions dealt with capital crimes, with felonies, and with larceny of anything over the value of 12d; anything under this sum was considered petty larceny. A great deal of the court's time (sometimes four of the six days which were set aside for the sessions) was, however, taken up with civil and financial litigation, actions real and personal, cases which would have been heard in England before the Court of Common Pleas. The Great Sessions could also, like the Council in the Marches, exercise an equitable⁵ jurisdiction.⁶ After a commission of enquiry determined that the system was open to abuse – since the court had no power to compel the attendance of accused who had left the county – and that the judges were often superannuated and second rate, the Great Sessions were abolished in 1830, and replaced by Assize Courts.

The Quarter Sessions were held for every county in Wales. They acted as courts of law for non-capital crimes and for crimes of petty larceny. They also served as the administration for the county – overseeing, amongst other things, the repair of roads and bridges, issuing alehouse licences, and administering the poor law. Because they were courts of law, any administrative matter had to be brought before them in the form of a presentment, which could then be dealt with by an order of the court. A Chief Constable, or a justice, would present a bridge or a road which was out of repair, so that the court could order the parish (in the case of a road), or the county (in the case of a bridge) to effect the repairs.

The same held true for the administration of the poor law. Though the functions of the law – the collection of poor rates and the administration of outdoor relief – were carried out at parish level, the courts became involved when a parish wished to remove a person or family to their parish of origin. For this, an order of the court was required. Often too, the parish about to receive the paupers appealed to the Quarter Sessions for a judgment on whether they had to receive them. Similarly, when a child was to be born out of wedlock, the court issued a bastardy order, binding the putative father to pay for the upkeep of the child.

It was the duty of the Sheriff to summon the officers of the court to attend. The writ of sessions was issued to the Sheriff by the Clerk of the Peace, in the name of the King, and witnessed by the *custos rotulorum*.⁷ The officers were the Chief and Petty Constables, who kept order in their respective hundreds and parishes, and the Bailiffs, who collected the various rates due to the court. Their names, including those of the Coroners (though they were actually officers of the Crown), were written in the *nomina ministrorum*, which was usually the largest of the documents generated by the court, and was thus used as the ‘wrapper’ for the enrolment of the papers and parchments at the end of the sessions.

Criminal cases were subject to a two-jury system: the Grand Jury, drawn from the ranks of the minor gentry and substantial yeomen who had lands giving an income of over £6 a year, and the Petty Jury, made up of lesser freeholders, shopkeepers and tradesmen. The Grand Jury were the first to consider the case. They retired to the Grand Jury room and studied the examinations and depositions, and decided if there were a case to answer. They pronounced the indictment ‘a true bill’ (*billa vera*), or if they decided there was no case to answer ‘no true bill’.⁸ If a true bill was found, the accused was then tried before what was often a jury of their peers – the Petty Jury – unless the case warranted being sent to the Great Sessions.

Cases from the Quarter Sessions could be called up to the superior court (the Great Sessions) by a writ of *certiorari*;⁹ the same applied to the calling up of cases from the Great Sessions to the Council in the Marches.

The system of administering both the smooth running of the counties and the legal system represented by the Quarter Sessions was built on the office of Justice of the Peace, which Henry VIII had found so effective in England. Whilst the Marcher Lords had ruled their lands idiosyncratically and partially, he could see that the creation of a strong body of Justices of the Peace, representing as they would the settled landowning classes, who viewed both the inhabitants and the wellbeing of their locality with a stern paternalism, would be far more effective and far less of a threat to the crown. The time was right, as a substantial landowning class, divided into

greater and lesser gentry, had arisen in Wales by the sixteenth century, despite the fact that the country was nominally held by the Crown and the Marcher Lords. Both had, over the centuries, granted manors and lands to their favourites and their loyal retainers. Well before the Statute of Uses of 1536 and the Tenures Abolition Act of 1660 these lands, once held solely by feudal tenure, were now considered as owned outright.

To qualify for the Commission of the Peace in England, a man had to own land worth £20 per annum; this was often waived for Wales, in recognition of the poorer land and smaller holdings. The second Act of Union set a limit of eight justices per county, but this limit was soon exceeded. Ivor Bowen tells us that Radnorshire had sixteen justices by 1575.¹⁰ A proportion of the justices was chosen for their knowledge of the law, and they were said to be ‘of the quorum’. All justices were supposed to swear a *deditus potestatum* (usually referred to simply as a *deditus*),¹¹ which allowed them to act in judgement in a court of law, but it appears that many never did.

THE COURTS IN RADNORSHIRE

After the Acts of Union, the new county of Radnorshire formed part of the Brecon circuit of the Great Sessions, along with Breconshire and Glamorgan. It had its own Quarter Sessions. The Great and Quarter Sessions for Radnorshire were originally to be held alternately in New Radnor and Rhayader. Rhayader was swiftly replaced by Presteigne as the joint county town. The purported explanation for this is that the first Great Sessions judge to sit in Rhayader was murdered in 1540, by a notorious family of outlaws. This is a little confusing, as the county of Radnor was not created until 1543 by the second Act of Union, and only then was the system of Great and Quarter Sessions established there. The judge in question may have been one of the Justices in Eyre,¹² who travelled in circuit during the time of the Marcher Lordships.

By 1660, Presteigne’s growing prosperity ensured that it became the sole county town. The county court was held alternately in Presteigne and New Radnor, but the Great Sessions were held only in Presteigne, as were the Quarter Sessions – until the eighteenth century when, for a period, they alternated between Presteigne and Knighton, possibly because the Shirehall in Presteigne had been destroyed by fire. Between the sixteenth and nineteenth centuries, there were several Shirehalls in Presteigne. Keith Parker tells us that the first of which there is any record was at the junction of Broad and High Streets; this is in the late seventeenth century, but he suggests that it was probably on the site of an earlier building.¹³ The Judges’ Lodgings were in another part of the town. By the early

nineteenth century, the Lodgings were felt by the judges to be inadequate for their comfort. At the same time, the shortcomings of the county gaol and house of correction, in Broad Street, were also becoming apparent (not least because of the escape of several inmates), and the magistrates decided to replace both. The new gaol was started in 1819, and the Shirehall, which included a judges' lodging, was built on the site of the old gaol, between 1825 and 1829.¹⁴

The gentry, from whom the Justices of the Peace were chosen, were not, at the time of the acts of union in Radnorshire, greatly wealthy. There is a famous rhyme, attributed to a Parliamentary Commissioner after the Civil War, and quoted by Howse:

Radnorsheer, poor Radnorsheer,
Never a park and never a deer.
Never a squire of five Hundred a year,
Save Richard Fowler of Abbey Cwmhir.¹⁵

The Fowlers were rich because they had been granted the abbey lands after the dissolution. Radnorshire was certainly one of the counties which would have had difficulty producing many justices who could comply with the £20 land qualification. The land was unsuited to much cultivation, and sheep were the mainstay of the economy. The boom in the wool trade of the late seventeenth century certainly improved matters. Land in Radnorshire was cheap, so it was easy for someone with relatively little money to purchase a substantial estate and thus buy their way into the gentry. They then joined old Radnorshire squires, such as the Lewis Lloyds of Nantgwyllt and the Gwynnes of Llanelwedd, on the bench. There seem to have been several Scots who bought up land, as they did in Breconshire after the enclosure of the Great Forest.

THE RADNORSHIRE QUARTER SESSIONS RECORDS

The Radnorshire Quarter Sessions records are held at Powys County Archives. They were transferred there from the National Library of Wales in December 1990. They had been transferred to the Library in two deposits, in 1962 and 1971, by the Clerk of the Peace, DCS Lane, having previously been stored in the Shirehall at Presteigne. There is an account in the Michaelmas 1773 Sessions Roll from Elizabeth Norgrove for lighting fires in the county record room of the old Shirehall¹⁶ which, whilst a laudable attempt to keep the records dry, must also have contributed to their current dirty state. Glyn Parry, in the introduction to his book on the Great Sessions, tells us of the inspections by WH Black. In his inspection

of 1839–1840, Black found the Radnorshire records ('a full cartload') to be in a wet heap on the floor of the room next to the Hall Keeper's sitting room. These records were from the Great and Quarter Sessions. They had presumably been moved from the old Shirehall in 1829 when the new building was opened and left there unsorted. They were either damp before their transfer, or became so afterwards, perhaps absorbing moisture from the new mortar and plaster. The stench was so great as to prevent the Hall Keeper from using the sitting room.¹⁷ They may have been worked on in the intervening years, but they were certainly sorted by a Mr Moro in 1873. At the Midsummer sessions, he submitted his account, and the Clerk of the Peace was ordered to sell all the papers found to be of no further use, as wastepaper.¹⁸

The surviving records consist of 13 Order Books covering the period from 1771 to 1951, without gaps. There are 786 Sessions Rolls from Michaelmas¹⁹ 1753 to Michaelmas 1968, with gaps, and about 4,500 items of supplementary material (115 archive boxes, as well as large rolled plans). This material includes deposited plans of public undertakings and other records relating to the roads and railways, enclosure records, and Shrievalty²⁰ papers. Some of it, as was discovered when undertaking this study, relates to particular sessions and could have been enrolled with the rest of the papers for that session, but for some reason was not.

Unlike those for Montgomeryshire and Breconshire (many of which were cleaned and guarded),²¹ no conservation work was carried out on the Radnorshire Sessions Rolls whilst they were at the National Library. They were, however, catalogued, and the catalogue reference numbers assigned to them then are still in use. The catalogue is arranged with the Order Books listed first (R/QS/OB), then the Sessions Rolls (R/QS/R), and lastly the supplementary records (R/QS/S) are listed in series. The supplementary records were all assigned a number from S/1 onwards, before they were put into series, so the numbering in the catalogue is not consecutive. Some of the supplementary records have one or sometimes two other numbers on them, which have been crossed out. In some cases the catalogue number and a brief description of the contents of the document have been handwritten onto a label which has then been stuck onto the document. This work was carried out many years ago, and is not a practice which would be used now. Milwyn Griffiths compiled two schedules,²² for the National Library of Wales. The current catalogue at Powys County Archives is based on this, and exists both in hard copy and electronic format.

The only indexing of the Radnorshire Quarter Session records which has been carried out is on Sessions Rolls 1 to 7,²³ which were calendared and indexed by Gordon Reid,²⁴ a former County Archivist for Powys. The

fourth Order Book²⁵ (1801–1813) has been digitised, and transcribed by a volunteer at Powys County Archives. Another volunteer has worked on the early rolls – unrolling the documents, removing them from the lace, and placing them in the original order in acid-free folders. The documents, though not as flat as they would be if they had been worked on by a conservator, are nonetheless much more accessible.

SELECTED EXTRACTS FROM THE QUARTER SESSIONS RECORDS STUDIED

The following extracts have been chosen to show the variety of business which came before the courts, for their interest for students of Radnorshire history, and sometimes simply because they are amusing. The spelling of place names and proper names in the extracts is as in the original. The catalogue numbers of the documents from which the extracts are taken are given in the endnotes.

1773

Epiphany

The main business of the adjourned sessions, held at the house of Edward Meyrick Junior of Knighton on 13 January 1773, comprised arrangements for rebuilding Glasbury Bridge. The specifications and costs are set out in the Order Book,²⁶ as well as the materials to be used. Radnorshire bore the entire cost of the new bridge because the pre-1844 border with Breconshire was not the River Wye, as it is today. In 1773, the border extended into what is now Breconshire, around that part of the village which is on the south bank of the river, so both ends of the bridge were in Radnorshire.²⁷

Easter

An indictment presented at these sessions²⁸ alleged that James Weal and Thomas Barber fraudulently obtained a Portugal Piece²⁹ of money and 1 guinea from John Morgan whilst playing cards. The examination by John Williams JP tells us that the alleged fraud took place at the Kings Head in Presteigne. Thomas Weal and Thomas Barber were playing cards. They persuaded John Morgan to place a side bet on Thomas Weal's hand. They then said that Thomas Weal had the losing hand, and took John Morgan's money.

Midsummer

The roll for the Midsummer sessions includes a list of coroner's expenses.³⁰ This is atypical amongst the records studied, as it gives the

causes of death. Between 18 September 1772 and 3 March 1773 the following were recorded: Edward Winston – sudden death, inquest taken at the Swan Inn, Clirow; Rice Price – ‘drownded in the Wye’, inquest taken at the house of David Meredith at Gwernsyth near Builth; William Lewis of Llandilo – killed near his own house, inquest taken at the house of John Jones of Caffan Tom Bach; James Lewis – died on [Cwmteuddwr] Hill, inquest taken at the Tower Hill in Rhayader; John Evans – ‘found drownded in a brook near his own house’, inquest taken at Tinpistil in the parish of Cwmtoyddwr. The total expenses were £7 13s 3d.

Michaelmas

An indictment³¹ dated 27 September 1773 alleged that David Meredith of Beguildy, Carpenter, stole 10 oak planks, 10 boards and 10 quarters, to the value of 1od. The dorse³² of the indictment supplies further information: ‘Prosecutor Richard Price, Gent’, ‘Witnesses Abednego Davies, Thomas Lucas, Edward Jones, William Jones’, ‘Sworn in Court, Price’, ‘A True Bill’, ‘Guilty’. The Order Book³³ tells us that the conviction was for felony and that David Meredith was ordered to be taken into the custody of the gaoler of the county.

1823

Epiphany

A precept, or warrant³⁴ dated 31 December 1822 was issued to the Constable of Aberedw. Edward Turner, the reputed father of a male child born to Elizabeth Williams at Dolegarn in Aberedw, had not complied with an order for its maintenance. The Constable was commanded to take him to the House of Correction in Presteigne until such time as he complied with the order or entered into a recognisance to appear at the next Sessions. The dorse of the document has the notes: ‘Dec 31 1822 Edward Turner came to the House of Correction’. The Order Book entry for Epiphany 1823³⁵ records an order that Edward Turner, committed to the House of Correction by James Pugh and Hugh Vaughan, JPs, for disobeying a Bastardy Order, be discharged from custody, as no one from the parish had appeared before the court, and the order was informal.

Easter

At the Easter sessions for 1823, there were several orders concerning bridges. Two were headed ‘General Rule’; the first³⁶ ordered that, when estimates for building, rebuilding or repairing bridges were delivered to the Clerk of the Peace, he should send them to the bridge magistrates for the Hundred where the bridge was situated, so that they could contract for

the works. The second³⁷ stated that, in future, the bridge surveyor should report on the state of the county bridges at the Easter Quarter Sessions. For the current year, Benjamin Wishlade, the present surveyor, was to give his report at the next Sessions.

There was an Order that Cabalva Bridge be repaired under the direction of the bridge magistrates, costs not to exceed £20.³⁸

Also at these sessions, the following magistrates were appointed to inspect and order repairs on bridges within their Hundreds: *Radnor* – Sir Harford Jones, John Whittaker, Edward Jenkins and James Barnes; *Painscastle* – Walter Wilkins, Walter Wilkins the younger, William Davies, Revd Richard Venables; *Colwyn* – Revd Richard Venables, Hugh Vaughan and Samuel Beavan; *Knighton* – Richard Price, Edward Rogers and Edward Jenkins; *Rhayader* – Hugh Powell Evans, Daniel Reid and Morgan John Evans; *Kevenleece* – Richard Price, John Cheesment Severn and Edward Jenkins.³⁹ A further order⁴⁰ provided for a handbill to be printed with the names of the bridge magistrates, which was to be sent to each Hundred and stuck on church doors.

Midsummer

At these sessions it was ordered that the following be appointed for the following year as Chief Constables of the Hundreds (for the upper and lower divisions respectively): *Radnor* – Samuel Probert Lovatt, Colva and Phillip Morris, Presteigne; *Painscastle*: Thomas Mainwaring, Gwernabowen and John Snead, Glasbury; *Knighton* – John Beaumont, Llandewy and Thomas Powys, Hearts-ease; *Kevenleece* – Thomas Davies, Llandrindod and Thomas Bore, Llanfihangel Rhydithon; *Rhayader* – John Breeze, St Harmon and John Davies, Newbridge, Llanyre; *Colwyn* – James Lloyd, Brinocrach, Llans[an]tfread and Thomas George, Aberedow.⁴¹

One of several removal orders at the sessions was the case of Glascombe v Llanfihangel Nantmellan; an appeal was entered against an order of Revd Richard Williams and Revd WP Williams, JPs for the Borough of New Radnor, dated 31 May 1823, for the removal of Ann Williams from the parish of Llanfihangel Nantmellan in the Borough of New Radnor to the parish of Glascombe. The appeal being heard, the order was confirmed and the churchwardens and overseers of the poor of the parish of Glascombe were ordered to pay the churchwardens and overseers of the poor of Llanfihangel Nantmellan 10s for their costs in defending the appeal.⁴²

Michaelmas

The roll for the Michaelmas sessions contains 71 alehouse recognisances.⁴³ These had been taken at General Meetings of his Majesty's Justices acting

in and for a particular Hundred. All but one are on pre-printed forms, giving the name of the Hundred, the name of the inn, the Innholder (who acknowledges himself indebted in the sum of £30) and the person standing surety (in the sum of £20). Sometimes 2 people stand surety, and the Innholder is not bound. The Innholder is enjoined to sell Bread and other victuals, Beer, Ale and other liquors, in the correct measure, but not during the hours of Divine Service or late at night, and not to allow drunkenness, gambling or dissolute persons on the premises. The register of the information taken from the recognisances covers 4 pages in the Order Book.⁴⁴

Below is information extracted from items 56–68 in the roll, the recognisances taken for the Hundred of Painscastle on 16 September 1823, at the Radnor Arms, Lowes:

<i>Name of Inn/Alehouse</i>	<i>Licensee</i>	<i>Person Standing Surety</i>
The Radnor Arms, Llowes	Thomas Pritchard	Thomas Herring of Brynrydd, Llowes
Rhosgoch, p ⁴⁵ Bryngwynne	James Powell	Thomas Griffiths of Dolycanne, Newchurch
The Church House, p Llandilo-Graban	John Pugh	Thomas Pugh of Lloynpenvane, Llandilo-Graban
White Hall, p Llanbeder Painscastle	Mary Morris	John Vaughan of Glyn, Clirow
The Boat, p Boughrood	James Williams	Rees Morgan of Tynycwm, Llandstephan
Rhydspence, p Bettws Clirow	William Wilton	Thomas Griffiths of Dolycarne, Newchurch
The Swan, p Clirow	Thomas Lilwall	John Vaughan of Glyn, Clirow
Summer Pole, p Michaelchurch	John Lloyd	Thomas Prosser of Llowes
Cavan Twm Bach, p Llandilo-Graban	David Evans	Thomas Pugh of Tyissa, Llandeilo-Graban
The Red Lion, p Newchurch	Richard Mills	John Lewis of Newchurch
The Six Bells, p Glasbury	John White	William Jones of Glasbury
The Hammer and Trowel, p Glasbury	Thomas Kitchenman on behalf of Anne Berry	Thomas Probert of Glasbury
The Lamb, p Glasbury	David Jones	David Jones of Rhydness, Llandstephan

1873**Epiphany**

The names on the Grand Jury list⁴⁶ which were ticked, and therefore sworn in, for these sessions were as follows: John Davies, Rhydmoldre, Llananno, Farmer; Evan Davies, Trelosgoed Mill, Cefnllys, Farmer; William Havard, Penwern, Glasbury, Farmer; Thomas Handley, Penrhiw, Llandilo Graban, Farmer; John Jones, Fowidd, Llanstephan, Farmer; Hugh Lloyd, Bryngwyn, Farmer; William Like, Cilturch, Glasbury, Farmer; John Meredith, Cwm, Old Forest, Clirow, Farmer; William Meredith, Tump, Clirow, Farmer; Roger Price, Blainy, Boughrood, Farmer; Thomas Price, Lower Pentre, Llandewy fach, Farmer; Richard Price, Tynaberth, Abbey Cwmhir, Farmer; Pugh Price, Cwmderw, Llanano, Farmer; James Perkins, Llanrithol, Llandrindod, Farmer; John Sheen, Bryngwyn, Farmer; James Williams, Vrondee, Llandewy fach, Farmer.

Those on the list but not sworn: Richard Davies, Old House, Llanbadarn fynydd, Farmer; Edward Edwards, Llanvihangel Rhydithon, Farmer; Matthew Fowler, Boat Inn, Boughrood, Miller; Edward Hamer, Lower Eskir, Llanbadarn fynydd, Farmer; John James, Gwenlas, Llanbadarn fynydd, Farmer; Thomas James, Rabber, Llanbadarn fawr, Farmer; Thomas Meredith, Hendy, Abbey Cwmhir, Farmer; John Williams, Tygwyn, Llandrindod, Farmer.

Easter

The office of Chief Constable of Radnorshire was now a salaried post; at the Epiphany Sessions a letter of resignation was received from Penry Lloyd, the current incumbent.⁴⁷ The Easter Sessions Roll contains correspondence relating to the appointment of his successor. A letter to the Under Secretary of State at the Home Office, from the Revd Venables (at 35 Eaton Square, London) conveyed the request of the county that the salary of the next Chief Constable be reduced from £250 to £200 pa, and that he be chosen from among the Superintendent rank. The population of the county was 26,000, and a police rate of 1d in the pound produced £520, to pay for the whole force. ‘From the scanty population and in great measure, from the habits of the people the amount of crime is singularly trivial both in number and in the character of the cases’. The Police Committee felt that such a salary, in Radnorshire, would still attract the right calibre of candidate.⁴⁸ The Under Secretary of State, AFO Liddell, replied reporting that the Secretary of State, Mr Bruce, was not willing to allow the suggestion of the Police Committee that the new Chief Constable be drawn from the Superintendent class and paid a smaller salary. It was felt that the Chief Constable should be of equal standing

with the magistrates with whom he had to deal, and also that he should be a person capable of leading men, and fostering good relations and sharing information with neighbouring Chief Constables. There was a suggestion that the Radnorshire police force could join with that of Breconshire or Herefordshire under one Chief Constable, if the committee wished to make savings.⁴⁹

But the magistrates decided on another approach. In a further letter,⁵⁰ the opinion of the Under Secretary was sought as to whether Secretary of State Bruce would approve the amalgamation of the posts of Chief Constable and Superintendent in Radnorshire, since it had been intimated that the salary of the Chief Constable must not be lower than £250 per annum. Mr Bruce had intimated to Mr Green Price that he would look favourably on this proposal, and indeed in a letter dated 24 April 1873⁵¹ Mr Secretary Bruce gives his approval to the appointment of Joseph Thompson Wheeldon as Chief Constable and Superintendent of Radnorshire. Penry Lloyd, meanwhile, was admitted to the bench at the Michaelmas sessions, his qualification certificate testifying to the fact that he had sufficient land in the parishes of Cefnllys and Llanwrtyd for this.⁵²

Midsummer

A letter from CJ Moro, regarding an account for sorting the Quarter Sessions records dating from 1752 to 1870, also [enclosure] awards, railway plans and other papers, was put before the bench.⁵³ Mr Moro hoped that the account, though submitted late to the Clerk of the Peace, would be paid at the next sessions. In a further letter enclosing the account Mr Moro stated that ‘the work has been a long, tedious and a very dusty one’.⁵⁴ The account is headed: ‘For searching for, collecting and arranging according to date the Sessional Records from the year 1752 inclusive to 1871 (121 years)’. The records fill 3 large boxes, and had been put away with a ‘vast quantity of old miscellaneous papers and letters relating to the county, now quite useless’. The account includes the packing of the ‘useless’ papers to be sold as waste and was for £7 12s.⁵⁵

Michaelmas

Edward Freeman, alias Thomas the younger, was charged with the attempted rape of Mary Ann Morgan, on 30 July 1873. Mary Ann Morgan, having visited several public houses in Presteigne, was on her way home with her basket at about 11 pm. Edward Freeman followed her, grabbed her basket and attempted to rape her. She got away from him and returned to the town, where she reported the assault to PC Thomas Jones.

Under examination, Mary Ann stated that she was fifty-eight years old, and had never brought a charge of this sort before. She also stated, *inter alia*, that she had been at Norton in the afternoon, but had nothing to drink there. On her return to Presteigne, she went to the Globe, but had nothing to drink there; she then went to the Farmer's Arms, but was only there for an hour. She did not behave indecently there; she did not show her legs there – her leg was not measured there. She did not hear the landlady order her out. Another female did not leave the room on account of her [Mary Ann's] indecent conduct. She did not ask any of the young fellows there to go home with her. She did not ask the prisoner to go with her and he did not stand beer for her, nor did she drink with him. She stayed at the Oxford Arms no longer than to drink her glass of beer and did not sit down there. She did not say to the prisoner 'If you will stand a pint of beer and carry my basket for me you shall have as much as you like'. Depositions were taken before James Beavan JP.⁵⁶ The endorsement of the indictment⁵⁷ records a not guilty verdict on all charges.

CONCLUSIONS

There is much more work to do on the Radnorshire Quarter Sessions records. Although it might be interesting to carry out a study such as those for Gloucestershire and Surrey,⁵⁸ detailing the types of records to be found, this would be of limited use to the researcher as the catalogue already supplies this information. A Name Index of the Sessions Rolls and the Order Book would be useful for family historians, but would be extremely time-consuming, and might also be of limited use, given the proliferation of names such as David Jones or William Evans which would be found. Visitors to Record Offices are often looking for the appearance of an ancestor in a specific type of record such as bastardy orders, or calendars of prisoners. A simple index of the contents of each roll would furnish this information, and would limit the search to rolls which had the type of record needed. The records would be handled less often, which is an important preservation consideration. This method has the added advantage of being much quicker to carry out. However, given the constraints on funding and staff time, this work would inevitably fall to volunteers or dedicated local historians, and their time is not limitless, and cannot be abused.

One method of affording access to the records, whilst also preserving them, is digitisation. A member of the Montgomeryshire Genealogical Society has spent many hours over several years taking digital photographs of all the items in the Sessions Rolls of the Montgomeryshire Quarter

Sessions for the whole of the eighteenth century. He then downloads them onto his computer and works on calendaring them at home. This could be done with the Radnorshire records, and the images could be sent to ‘remote’ volunteers, as had been done with some school Log Books. But the Montgomeryshire records were conserved by the National Library of Wales whilst in their custody; they are clean and, more importantly, flat. The Radnorshire records are much more intransigent, and would, at a rough estimate, take four times as long to digitise. With little hope of funding for the conservation of such a vast quantity of records, the only short-term solution is the indexing of at least those records which have been partially flattened and encased in acid-free folders.

In conclusion, therefore, it must be noted that the Quarter Sessions records for ‘Poor Radnorsheer’ have been ignored for too long; they lack the benefit of having been conserved by the National Library of Wales, and are used only incidentally by historians and other researchers. The dissertation was therefore timely, and it is hoped that it has revealed the potential of these records as a research resource and demonstrated the need for a large scale, systematic study, as well as essential conservation to improve access.

NOTES

¹ The article is taken from an MSc dissertation, a copy of which has been donated to the Society’s library.

² The Order Books record the business of the sessions, mostly in the form of orders passed. They are a form of minute book. The Sessions Rolls consist of all the paperwork generated before and during the sessions, such as indictments, depositions and accounts, which were enrolled at the end of the sessions. These papers were often pierced by a large needle threaded with a leather lace, which was then pulled through and used to tie the roll.

³ TH Lewis, ‘The Justice of the Peace in Wales’, *Transactions of the Honourable Society of Cymmrodorion*, (1946 for 1943–4), p.120.

⁴ The act was passed in 1542, but the literature usually dates it to 1543.

⁵ Equity: In England, the distinctive name of a system of law existing side by side with the common and statute law, and superseding these, when they conflict with it. A decision ‘in equity’ is understood to be one given in accordance with natural justice, in a case for which the law did not provide adequate remedy, or in which its operation would have been unfair. OED online, at: <http://dictionary.oed.com>.

⁶ Glyn Parry (ed.), *Guide to the records of Great Sessions in Wales*, (Aberystwyth: National Library of Wales, 1995), pp.vii–x.

⁷ The records of the court were nominally in the safekeeping of the *custos rotulorum*, initially one of the justices, chosen by virtue of his elevated social position in the county. Later the office was combined with that of Lord Lieutenant of the county.

⁸ Sometimes the Clerk wrote *ignoramus*, that is to say, ‘we do not know’.

⁹ A writ issued from a superior court [i.e. the Great Sessions, in Wales], upon the complaint of a party that he has not received justice in an inferior court, or cannot have an impartial trial, by which records of the cause are called up for trial in the superior court. OED online, at: <http://dictionary.oed.com>.

¹⁰ Ivor Bowen, 'Grand juries, justices of the peace, and quarter sessions in Wales', *Transactions of the Honourable Society of Cymmrodorion* (1936 for 1933–5), p.125.

¹¹ A writ empowering one who is not a judge to do some act in place of a judge. OED online at: <http://dictionary.oed.com>.

¹² Itinerant judges who rode the circuit to hold courts in the different counties. These justices were usually members of the superior courts, though the sheriffs sometimes performed this duty.

¹³ Keith Parker, *Radnorshire's old county town: a history of Presteigne*, (Wootton Almeley: Logaston Press, 1997), p.50.

¹⁴ Ibid., pp.118–123.

¹⁵ WH Howse, *Radnorshire*, (Hereford: E. J. Thurston, 1949), p.49.

¹⁶ R/QS/R/31: item 20.

¹⁷ Glyn Parry, op.cit. quoting from: PRO: 1/21/7 [vol. 2] ff. 72-3; PRO, *DK Rep.* 1 (1840–41), p.97.

¹⁸ R/QS/OB/11: order 13 for Midsummer 1873 and R/QS/R/409: item 14.

¹⁹ The names of the sessions for Radnorshire were: Epiphany, Easter, Midsummer and Michaelmas.

²⁰ Relating to the office of Sheriff.

²¹ A bookbinding term: (a) To supply (a guard book) with guards; (b) To attach (a leaf or plate) to a guard, (*Funk's Stand. Dict.*) OED online at: <http://dictionary.oed.com>.

²² G Milwyn Griffiths, *A schedule of the Radnorshire Quarter Sessions records*, (Aberystwyth: National Library of Wales, 1963), and G Milwyn Griffiths, *A schedule of additional Radnorshire Quarter Sessions records*. (Aberystwyth: National Library of Wales, 1971).

²³ R/QS/R/1-7.

²⁴ Gordon Reid, *A Calendar of Radnorshire Quarter Sessions rolls: Michaelmas 1753-Easter 1771*, (Powys: Powys County Archive Office, 1994).

²⁵ R/QS/OB/4.

²⁶ R/QS/OB/1: order 22 for Epiphany 1773.

²⁷ By the statute 7 & 8 Victoria, c.61, the detached portion of Radnorshire on the south-east side of the Wye was annexed to Breconshire.

²⁸ R/QS/R/29: item 4.

²⁹ Ibid.: item 13 provides the information that a Portugal Piece is also called a 36 shilling piece.

³⁰ R/QS/R/30: item 5.

³¹ R/QS/R/31: item 3.

³² The back of the document.

³³ R/QS/OB/1: order 19 for Michaelmas 1773.

³⁴ R/QS/R/223: item 7.

³⁵ R/QS/OB/5: order 9 for Epiphany 1823.

³⁶ ibid.: order 7 for Easter 1823.

³⁷ ibid.: order 9 for Easter 1823.

³⁸ ibid.: order 11 for Easter 1823.

³⁹ ibid.: order 12 for Easter 1823.

⁴⁰ ibid.: order 13 for Easter 1823.

⁴¹ ibid.: order 18 for Midsummer 1823.

⁴² ibid.: order 5 for Midsummer 1823.

⁴³ R/QS/R/226: items 13-84.

⁴⁴ R/QS/OB/5: Michaelmas 1823, pp. 212-214.

⁴⁵ p = 'parish of'.

⁴⁶ R/QS/R/407: item 48.

⁴⁷ ibid.: (adjourned sessions, held on 17 January 1873), item AS2.

⁴⁸ R/QS/R/408: item 8.

⁴⁹ ibid.: item 7.

⁵⁰ ibid.: item 5.

⁵¹ ibid.: item 1.

⁵² R/QS/R/410: item 6.

⁵³ R/QS/R/409: item 12.

⁵⁴ ibid.: item 13.

⁵⁵ ibid.: item 14.

⁵⁶ R/QS/R/410: items 8 & 9.

⁵⁷ ibid.: item 11.

⁵⁸ IE Gray and AT Gaydon, *Gloucestershire Quarter Sessions archives, 1660–1889, and other official records: a descriptive catalogue for the County Records Committee*, (Gloucester : Gloucestershire County Council, 1958) and Dorothy L Powell and Hilary Jenkinson (eds.), *Surrey quarter sessions records* (Kingston; London: Printed by Knapp, Drewitt & Sons, 1934).

PURITANS IN CHARGE AT PRESTEIGNE

Michael Readhead

For two short periods in the seventeenth century, from 1627 to 1633 and from 1652 to 1660, the living at Presteigne was owned by a group of London puritans. This article pays particular attention to the identities of the two people appointed to the parish after 1652, and to the way in which their appointments may have come about. In doing so it aims to throw more light on the situation in the parish and the surrounding area under the Commonwealth, during which four in every five parish priests in Brecon and Radnor were ejected.¹

The history of the parish of Presteigne in the early seventeenth century is a complex one. This is largely because the ownership of the rectory and the vicarage (and the rights to their respective tithes)² changed hands on numerous occasions. The exact sequence of events was set out in two articles in 1957 by WH Howse.³ His sources were an account written by the Reverend Philip Lewis into the parish register in 1671,⁴ and a large number of documents relating to the parish in the archives at Brampton Bryan. These show that Sir Robert Harley, who, together with his wife Brilliana, was an ardent supporter of the puritan wing of the Church,⁵ had purchased both the rectory and the vicarage in 1619. In 1627 he sold the rectory, and gave the vicarage, to the Feoffees for Improvements,⁶ a group of twelve prominent London puritans, whose primary aim was to use the income from the tithes which they acquired to fund lectureships in London parishes. However, following a case brought against them for being a corporation formed without a royal charter, this group was dissolved in 1633, and their property was forfeited to the Crown.

In 1639 the parishioners petitioned for a new vicar who would spend more time in the parish.⁷ However, in the same year, the Reverend John Scull, who had been the vicar since 1611, in what was probably a preemptive move, obtained a grant of the reversion of the tithes of the rectory,⁸ to add to those of the vicarage which he already received, on condition that 'he continually make residence' in the parish. The grant describes the revenue of the vicarage as 'so slender and scanty'. This appeared to be recognition that the vicarage tithes often did not provide adequate remuneration for the incumbent, who therefore found himself obliged to combine his parish post with other positions.⁹

Parliament now moved to return ownership to the Feoffees. In 1643 they ordered that the tithes that had accrued between 1639 and 1643 should be paid back to them, and then, in 1647, by overturning the decision of

1633, restored their property to them in full. The Act for the Propagation of the Gospel in Wales, passed in early 1650, also transformed the political and religious landscape in the Principality. Indeed, the Commission set up under it was given such wide powers that its members are regarded as having been, for the next three years, the virtual rulers of Wales.¹⁰ Under the provisions of this act, Richard Lucas was appointed to the rectory of Presteigne. WH Howse reproduces a document at Brampton Bryan which is a copy, in Richard Lucas's handwriting and signed by him, of the deed of 16 March 1652, which ordered that 'Mr Richard Lucas bee forthwith invested and settled in the said vicaradg and parsonage . . . as fully and as completely as by the aforesaid act we are authorized and enabled to grant'. (The majority of the signatories listed were members of the main Commission, and included Bussy Mansell and Col. Philip Jones.) Up to this point the Feoffees seem not to have received any income from the tithes since they were restored to ownership in 1647. After Richard Lucas arrived, £100 from the rectory tithes was sent to them every year (from an estimated £160), an indication perhaps that they may have played some part in his appointment. But who was he? In Philip Lewis's 1671 account he is described as being a 'London tailor'. Given that we know that Lewis's younger brother, Rees Lewis, had been apprenticed to the London Clothworkers' Company,¹¹ it seems that this could be interpreted as meaning that Lucas was a member of the Merchant Taylors' Company. Such an interpretation is supported by a further document at Brampton Bryan which gives Richard Lucas's age in 1655 as forty, and by an entry in the Merchant Taylors' Apprentice Register for 1630. This is for the apprenticeship of Richard Lucas, son of Richard Lucas of Freeby, Leicestershire, yeoman, for nine years.¹² (The usual age for apprenticeship was 16, so he would have been born in 1614 or 1615.) He was made free of the company in 1639. (Freeby is a small village near Melton Mowbray. There is an entry in the parish register there which records the baptism of 'Samuel, son of Richard Lucas' in 1627.)

In 1655, a second person was appointed to the rectory of Presteigne in a deed which had also been 'exhibited' to the Committee for Approbation of Publique Preachers, and which was signed by their secretary John Nye under the Protector's seal. Howse quotes this in full, proving that the person appointed was Thomas Cole, not 'Thomas Knowles' as Lewis had written, but did not discover anything further about him. As it happens there is an entry for Thomas Cole in Calamy,¹³ and from this, and from the revision of this work by WG Matthews¹⁴ (who unfortunately decided that there were two clergymen of this name), it is clear that he had been born in London in 1628. He was the son of a wealthy merchant named William Cole, and had been educated at Westminster School and at Christ Church,

Oxford, where he took his MA in 1650.¹⁵ Perhaps his appointment had been prompted by the complaints of the Presteigne parishioners about Lucas not being ordained, and, although this was also true of Cole at this date, he had undoubtedly received the appropriate education for such a post. It may also be significant that Thomas Harley,¹⁶ a younger son of Sir Robert and a contemporary of Cole's, was a witness to an agreement between Cole and Richard Lucas in April 1655, about how the administration of the parish should be split between them.¹⁷ However, within the year Thomas Cole had been appointed Principal of St Mary's Hall, Oxford (where both John Scull and Philip Lewis had been educated),¹⁸ a post in Cromwell's gift as Chancellor of the University. Richard Lucas thus reassumed his original role at Presteigne until at least 1660.

With the Restoration of 1660, both Thomas Cole and Richard Lucas lost their positions, and the Feoffees again lost all their property to the Crown. Cole was ordained, and accepted Colonel Edward Harley's invitation to become rector of Brampton Bryan, but resigned after the passing of the Act of Uniformity in 1662.¹⁹ It seems that Lucas may have settled in the adjacent village of Lingen, since there is an entry in the Apprentice Register of the London Vintners' Company in 1668 for 'Samuel Lucas, son of Richard Lucas of Lingen, Herefordshire, Clerk'.²⁰ (Like his elder brother Richard, who went to Jesus College, Oxford in 1665,²¹ he had no doubt attended Presteigne Grammar School.) By late 1661 Philip Lewis had taken up his appointment as rector at Presteigne, and it is interesting, in the light of his later account, that he, Cole and Lucas were therefore living in adjacent villages until Cole resigned his post, and that both Lucas's sons were at the grammar school, where Lewis no doubt occasionally taught (and had himself been educated), during the 1660s.

Knowing the identities of Richard Lucas and Thomas Cole makes it possible to form a clearer and more balanced picture of the situation in the parish, during the strange and uncertain decade and a half that followed the Civil War. Although the petition for a new person to take charge of the parish had not been successful in 1639, it may have prompted change. There were vocal parishioners and influential local 'patrons' like the Harley family, and affairs at Presteigne continued to be administered by people of ability.²² As can be seen, Thomas Cole came from a wealthy and educated background, and both Richard Lucas and Philip Lewis seem to have been members of prosperous yeoman families, who could afford to offer their sons a university education or a livery company apprenticeship. This seems to demonstrate that, despite the turbulence in national politics and religious affairs which characterised this period, at local level there was often a strong undercurrent of continuity and moderation.

NOTES

¹ JW James, '1662 and Before', *The Journal of the Historical Society of the Church in Wales*, 1961. The full figures show that 67 of the 81 incumbents were ejected.

² The 'great' tithes of corn and hay belonged to the rectory; those from other products (e.g. flax and wool) to the vicarage.

³ 'The Rectory of Presteigne 1552–1712', *Transactions of the Radnorshire Society*, 1957, pp. 29–39, and 'Contest for a Radnorshire Rectory', *The Journal of the Historical Society of the Church in Wales*, 1957, pp. 36–43. The chronology which follows is based on these two articles.

⁴ This account is interspersed with passages of unrestrained invective against all puritans who had been connected to Presteigne. Such passages were not uncommon in pamphlets of this period. His suggestion that Thomas Cole was an Anabaptist is clearly at odds with Cole's appointment as rector of Brampton Bryan. Cole's views appear to have been in fact more or less those of a Calvinist (see below, ODNB 'Thomas Cole').

⁵ *The Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, (thereafter ODNB), 'Sir Robert Harley'.

⁶ Improper tithes (impropriations) were those which were in lay hands. An important member of this group was Rowland Heylin, a London Alderman and Ironmonger from an ancient Welsh family, who helped to finance a number of publications in Welsh, including the Bible of 1630. For the Feoffees see Isobel McBeath Calder, *A Puritan Faction of the Church of England*, (SPCK, 1957).

⁷ The National Archives (thereafter TNA).

⁸ In January 1639 the tithes had been granted for five years to Thomas Turner D.D. and John Juxon.

⁹ John Scull seems to have been chaplain to Robert Bertie, Lord Willoughby, and, for a period from 1611, also rector of Llanbadarn Fawr in Radnorshire.

¹⁰ AH Dodd, *Studies in Tudor Wales*, (Cardiff, 1971), p.148.

¹¹ Ruth Bidgood, 'The History of Llanddewi Hall', *Transactions of the Radnorshire Society*, 1975, pp. 24, 26.

¹² London, The Guildhall Library, Apprentice Register of the Merchant Taylors' Company.

¹³ Edmund Calamy, *The Nonconformists' Memorial; being an account of the ministers who were ejected or silenced after the Restoration, particularly by the Act of Uniformity*, (London, 1775).

¹⁴ AG Matthews, *Calamy Revised*, (Oxford, 1934).

¹⁵ ODNB, 'Thomas Cole'. He later ran a dissenting academy in Oxfordshire, and then took charge of an Independent congregation in the City of London.

¹⁶ Thomas Harley had attended Trinity College, Cambridge, and had then become a fellow of All Souls' College, Oxford. He later lived at Kinsham Court.

¹⁷ Nottingham, Nottinghamshire Archives, DD/4P/72/122. There is another copy of this document at Brampton Bryan.

¹⁸ Joseph Foster, *Alumni Oxonienses*, (Oxford, 1888).

¹⁹ For an account of this act, of the conference that preceded it, and of its effect in Wales, see JW James, '1662 and Before', *The Journal of the Historical Society of the Church in Wales*, 1961.

²⁰ London, The Guildhall Library, Apprentice Register of the Vintners' Company.

²¹ ODNB, 'Richard Lucas'; *The Welsh Dictionary of National Biography*, 'Richard Lucas'.

²² It is clear from a letter in Nottingham Archives, DD/4P/72/123, that the parishioners of Presteigne were consulting Col. Edward Harley in 1660 about the vacant post of rector (they assumed he favoured Philip Lewis), just as he was himself appointing Thomas Cole to the rectory at Brampton Bryan.

ROBERT PRICE (1653–1733) AND HIS RADNORSHIRE ASSOCIATIONS

ED Evans

Robert Price was not a native of Radnorshire and, on first impressions, his connection with the county appears to be very tenuous, but a closer investigation reveals that he had an extended connection with it in one way or another. He was born at Giler, Cerrig y Drudion, in Denbighshire in 1653, the eldest of three sons and five daughters, but he was the only one of the family who received the education to earn a living ‘by the Law’. After a year at St John’s College, Cambridge, he entered Lincoln’s Inn, London, and was in due course called to the Bar. This removed him from his native county, and the first part of his professional career was spent in the Welsh Marches. He was drawn towards the Council in the Marches, which sat at Ludlow, and built up a practice there which extended into Radnorshire. At Ludlow he came into contact with the Rodd family of Rodd, near Presteigne; Robert Rodd was also a barrister of Gray’s Inn. More important for our consideration was Price’s marriage to Robert Rodd’s eldest daughter Lucy, after which they settled at her home, Foxley, in the parish of Yazor, Herefordshire. When Robert Rodd died in 1688, the estate passed to his three daughters, who were co-heiresses, and by that time Price had accumulated enough money to buy out his wife’s two sisters, paying them £1,500 each for their shares, which put him in outright possession.

His work at Ludlow brought him into contact with the Marquis of Worcester, who was the Lord President of the Council of Wales and the Lord Lieutenant of the whole of Wales. Thereafter, Price became one of his principal agents in governing his vast fief, which included English border counties as well as Wales, until the Council was abolished in 1689. This affected Radnorshire, being on the high road to Ludlow, more than any other Welsh county. Robert Price had, moreover, another contact with Radnorshire in the Member of Parliament for the county from 1661 to 1676, Sir Richard Lloyd of Esclus, Denbighshire, as Price’s grandfather had married into the Lloyd family, then of Dulasau, Caernarfonshire. Lloyd had been elected in 1661 for two constituencies, Radnorshire and Cardiff, but chose to sit for Radnorshire. He was also a judge of the Court of Great Sessions on the south-eastern circuit, which included Radnorshire, and had been the most ardent advocate for keeping the Council in the Marches in being. In 1651, he had drawn up a detailed memorandum in defence of the Council when the Commonwealth

Government made an attack on prerogative courts, the Council in the Marches being one of the casualties. After the Restoration, in 1661 Sir Richard again revived the case he had previously made in favour of resurrecting the Council, and was successful. Robert Price's kinship with Sir Richard meant that he owed a great deal to him for putting him on the right road to a successful legal career.

These connections helped Price to an appointment as Attorney General for south Wales as well as to local offices in Radnorshire and Herefordshire, especially the recorderships of New Radnor and of Hereford, where he also became an alderman of the city. He lost all his appointments at the Revolution of 1688 when the Council of the Marches was abolished and Worcester (by then Duke of Beaufort) was deprived of his offices. Price was able to retain only one office which was important for his Radnorshire activities, namely the recordership of New Radnor. Having lost the patronage of Beaufort, Price, always assiduous in cultivating advantageous relations, turned nearer to home and found a patron in the rising politician, Robert Harley of Brampton Bryan, just over the Radnorshire border.

Aspiring barristers ever aimed to climb higher in their profession, and one means of achieving that was by entering into politics. A seat in Parliament brought one into contact with persons who had patronage to bestow in reward for services. Robert Price had Weobley as a constituency near at hand to his Foxley seat and, through the political interest attached to his estate and those of his friends, he entered Parliament as MP for Weobley in 1685. That was the election which followed James II's accession to the throne after three attempts had been made, in three parliaments between 1679 and 1681, to exclude him from the succession. James II was a Roman Catholic, intent on restoring that religion in Britain, and consequently he would have imperilled the Church of England. The King commanded the Duke of Beaufort to summon all the Welsh Justices of the Peace and Deputy-Lieutenants of every Welsh county to Ludlow to ascertain their attitude towards removing the penal laws in force against Catholics. As an agent of the Duke of Beaufort, Robert Price must have had a hand in this manoeuvre, much to his embarrassment as an adherent of the High Church party of the Church of England. Price was closeted with the King himself, and assured His Majesty that he would serve him in all things except in measures that would imperil the Church. Such measures led to the crisis in 1688, when the King realised he had gone too far and promised to call a new parliament, hoping that it would be more compliant than the one elected in 1685. In preparation for this, a list of persons who were likely to be amenable to abolishing the religious tests

was drawn up for each county, and it was alleged that Robert Price's name was on that list. This was a source of great embarrassment to him after the Revolution of 1688 which turned James II off the throne, and it was a matter which his political enemies were to seize upon later, as we shall see.

The Exclusion crisis of 1679–81 brought into existence two political parties: the exclusionists, who were to become known as Whigs, and the loyalists, who were named Tories. We are now entering the age of 'the rage of parties', and nowhere in Wales did it rage more than in Radnorshire. Robert Price was a staunch Tory, but from Radnorshire there also emerged, in the person of Rowland Gwynne of Llanelwedd, a figure who became known not only locally but nationally as a Whig. Gwynne belonged to a family of that name which had played an important part in the politics of the county in the seventeenth century, and its political interest, which Gwynne was able to exploit, was one of the strongest in the county. Thus, before he had attained his majority, Gwynne entered Parliament in 1679 and served in the three Exclusion Parliaments, giving his committed support to parliamentary bills for excluding James, Duke of York as he then was, from succeeding his brother, King Charles II. He was also elected to the Convention Parliament for the county in 1689 and for the boroughs in 1690.

Thus Robert Price and Sir Rowland Gwynne (for he was knighted in 1680) were contemporaries, both immersed in the political life of Radnorshire, but on opposite sides. I was curious to know whether a more personal, other than political, relationship existed between them and, unexpectedly, found the answer in the late RCB Oliver's three-part article in the previous number of these *Transactions*.¹ It transpires that Sir Rowland had a sister Joanna, both being children of George and Sibil Gwynne of Llanelwedd. She was twice married, first to James Price of Pilleth as his second wife. From his first wife, Hester nee Kyrle, James Price had had a daughter, Hester, who married a Herefordshire baronet, Sir John Morgan of Kinnersley, who thus acquired a Radnorshire footing and, as we shall see later, played an active part in its politics. James Price was descended on his mother's side from the Rodd family. James Price married Joanna Gwynne as his second wife and, when he died in 1677, left all his estate in Radnorshire to her, his will being witnessed by George Gwynne of Llanelwedd and Richard Rodd of Rodd. Joanna married as her second husband Sir Standish Hartsonge, whose family had settled in Ireland and who, raised in the law, became a Baron of the Irish Exchequer. Thus there was a professional affinity between him and Robert Price when he married Joanna and settled in Radnorshire. There he bought the Trewern estate, together with a house in Hereford city. Thus, through Joanna's first

marriage, there were ties of kinship between her and Robert Price through the Rodd family. Robert Price had another connection with the Gwynne family in that he was a cousin (how distant is unknown) to Richard Williams, Caebalfa, friend, collaborator and family connection to Sir Rowland Gwynne.

There was considerable overlap between Radnorshire and Herefordshire politics, and conflicts in one often spilled over into the other. At the election to the Convention Parliament in 1689 at Weobley, Robert Price was opposed and defeated by Sir John Morgan (see above), who spread it abroad, much to Price's embarrassment, that his name had been on the King's 1688 list of persons alleged to be willing to comply with his policy of abolishing the penal laws. Morgan had been more adroit in deserting King James's cause and embracing the Revolution. Morgan's allies in Radnorshire were Sir Rowland Gwynne and Richard Williams, who shared the county and borough seats between them, as the Harleys, their main opponents, left the field open to them in 1689. When the 1690 election came, however, positions were reversed, Williams standing for the county and Gwynne for the boroughs. Robert Harley had contemplated standing for the county against Richard Williams, much to Robert Price's embarrassment because of his kinship with Williams. He sought to avoid displeasing the Harleys, however, by standing 'neutral': 'if my indifference be of use to you, of that you may be secure by my absence and silence',² he assured Harley. His loyalty was not put to the test, however, as Robert Harley decided to challenge Gwynne in the boroughs. There Price, as recorder of New Radnor, could be of service to him, since it was the largest of the contributory boroughs which made up the electorate. Price was only too happy to oblige, since Gwynne was the nominee and had the backing of Colonel John Birch, who was his opponent in Weobley.

The 1690 election was a trial of strength between native families, when the Harleys' ambition to dominate was put to the challenge. Sir Rowland Gwynne was not confident of success, however, and at the poll recklessly brought in voters from three boroughs that were not traditional contributory boroughs, Painscastle, Norton and Presteigne. Since the bailiff, who was in Gwynne's pocket, was the acting returning officer, he allowed them to vote, which gave Gwynne a clear majority, and he was declared the victor. The Harleys could not suffer such a humiliation and petitioned the House of Commons against the return. The story has been told by Dr JA Downie,³ but one thing he has not mentioned is the part played by Robert Price in the proceedings. Robert Harley put the case in his hands, and he gathered evidence and had a bevy of geriatrics transported to London to testify that from time immemorial the three boroughs had never participated in an

election. Thus, when the petition was heard in the House, Robert Price, it was said, was able to answer all questions and to meet all points raised. Sir Rowland Gwynne defended himself and based his claims upon an antiquated document which time had made quite illegible. His defence was laughed out of court: the only vote in his favour besides his own was that of Richard Williams, the Member for the county. On this occasion Robert Price set aside all qualms about opposing Richard Williams, being more intent on ingratiating himself with the Harleys. They, likewise, reciprocated by giving him support in his Herefordshire constituency. Thereafter, the Harleys dominated both the Radnorshire county and borough constituencies, either through a nominee like John Jeffreys of the Priory, Brecon, or through a family member, Robert Harley himself sitting for New Radnor until he was elevated to the House of Lords as Lord Oxford in 1711. It has been argued that he, not Sir Robert Walpole, was the first Prime Minister in British history, and it is well to remember that he represented a Welsh constituency. Robert Price continued as his political agent, describing himself as 'the main agent' of the Harley party in the borderland. After the debacle of 1690, Sir Rowland Gwynne was driven to a Brecknockshire constituency, and he was never again to represent Radnorshire. Price made common cause with Harley against Charles Cornewall, another activist in both Radnorshire and Herefordshire. With Sir John Morgan, however, his adversary in 1689, he was able to repair bridges when he moved a bill in the House of Commons in defence of his right to parliamentary privilege. Robert Harley also used Price as an intermediary with MPs in the borderland when Harley sought to defeat efforts by High Church Tories to ban the practice of occasional conformity by which Dissenters were able to hold public office.

After serving as MP in five parliaments in King William III's reign, Price resigned his seat in 1702 in favour of his son Thomas. In 1700, through the influence of Robert Harley, as he acknowledged, Price was appointed a judge in the Welsh Courts of Great Sessions, serving the south-eastern circuit, which included Radnorshire. This did not preclude him from remaining an MP but, when he was elevated to a Barony of the Court of Exchequer in 1702 and assumed the coif, he had to resign his seat. Thereafter, his relationship with Radnorshire was more upon a personal than a professional level.

Foxley remained his family home, but Price's work in London afforded him few opportunities for long visits. Such visits were, however, poignant to him since family relationships had broken down. Lucy Rodd, whom he had married in September 1679, gave birth to her first son, Thomas, three months later in January 1680. A daughter, Lucy, born in December 1681,

became a great solace to her father as his correspondence amply illustrates. Lucy was to marry her cousin Bamfylde Rodd and settled in the ancestral home at Rodd. A second son, Uvedale Tomkyns, a name with associations with Foxley, was born in September 1685.

In 1690, Price's marriage broke down when his wife eloped with her cousin, the son of Thomas Neale, the Groom Porter, known as 'the great projector', from which family her mother was descended. She gave birth to a child by him, and he was sued for damages to the sum of £10,000 in the Court of Common Pleas, but Price was awarded only £1,500. What the circumstances were which called for such a reduction are not known. It led to a separation rather than a divorce, and Price settled £100 a year upon her 'in consideration of the natural love and affection which they respectively bore to their children', upon whom he likewise made individual settlements. It appears that the children were left in her care except when they were at school in London, when they were under their father's eye. It also appears from the children's correspondence that they retained relationships with both parents.

Tragedy again befell the family in 1706 when Thomas, the eldest son and now an MP, was murdered while making the Grand Tour. His was an unusual tour, which did not follow the conventional routes and was evidently prescribed by his father. It took Thomas to Hanover in the first place, where he visited the court of the Electress Sophia, who, by the Act of Settlement of 1701, had become the Queen presumptive of Britain. Evidently Price looked forward to ingratiating his family with the Hanoverians when they succeeded Queen Anne. It was something of a gamble, since Queen Anne did not relish anyone paying visits to Hanover and was even more hostile to those visiting St Germain, which might have branded one as a Jacobite. It appears that Thomas was well-received by the Electress's court and got on well with the princes, her sons. It is intriguing to wonder whether Thomas Price met Sir Rowland Gwynne at Hamburg, where he had fled to avoid enquiries into allegations of financial embezzlement when he was Treasurer of the Chamber during King William III's reign. As seconder of the House of Commons's resolution to enact the Bill of Settlement in the Electress's favour, Gwynne expected to find favour at her court and might have resented Thomas's appearance there, but of that we have no knowledge.

Thomas Price went to Vienna from Hamburg, making his way to Italy, taking in the prescribed towns of the Grand Tour. He kept his family at home informed of his progress. To his father he wrote about the art galleries of Florence, descriptions of the noble houses he had visited, and observations upon courts and governments. One cannot but feel that he

was hoodwinking his father by impressing upon him that he was putting his time and money to good purpose. His letters to his brother Uvedale were in a lighter vein, dwelling largely upon the attractions of the women and the jealousy of the men. He wrote in a more robust mood to his mother, dwelling upon a fight he had had with a German nobleman whom he had sorely wounded and who died shortly afterwards.

His braggadocio landed him in trouble in Venice, where he courted a nobleman's wife, enamoured of her good looks. Her husband took offence and, when Thomas left for Genoa, he had him followed by some toughs who shot and killed him in bed. His money was seized by the senate of Genoa and, since he was regarded as a heretic, he was buried in a leaden coffin at sea, making one suspect that he was infected with the pox. His death coincided with his brother Uvedale's coming of age, when he left Cambridge and later entered Lincoln's Inn, his father's old Inn.

Robert Price was dumbfounded that his son should have behaved so recklessly: it was being put about that he had taken his own life. Erasmus Lewis, Robert Harley's secretary, writing to his master on 31 October 1706 from Whitehall, stated: 'It is given out here that Baron Price's son shot himself at Genoa, but I am very well informed that he was not his own executioner; there was jealousy in the case occasioned by his own ill conduct, which was the most imprudent in the world'. The scandal was a great affliction to Robert Price, but he tried to put a better face upon it in a letter to his friend, Bishop Humphrey Humphreys of Hereford, extolling his son's virtues above his failings, and claiming that his diaries showed him to be 'pious, urbane and good'.⁴ He might also have found some solace in the company of Lady Hartsonge, who herself was to grieve over the loss of her only son Gwynne in 1709.

Upon Sir Standish Hartsonge's retirement, he and his wife Joanna settled in Hereford, but maintained a connection with Radnorshire through the Trewern estate which they had bought for their son Gwynne, and that is our next point of contact with Robert Price and his family. Sir Standish and Robert Price shared not only professional interests but also a personal friendship so, when he died in 1702, Lady Hartsonge became more dependent upon Price than upon anyone else. Her brother, Sir Rowland Gwynne, was more of an affliction than of a comfort to her, since he and his brother George fleeced her of most of her wealth, she having gifted and lent a good deal of her money to them. Sir Rowland was heavily in debt when she died in 1718, but she released him from all obligations which, however, he could not have met, since he died in 1726 in a debtors' prison. Neither Robert Harley nor Robert Price lifted a finger to rescue him. Lady Hartsonge appointed Robert Price as the sole executor of her will, which

before it could be executed necessitated a parliamentary bill to enforce it.⁵ Though not in Parliament himself by then, he had a long expertise in piloting private bills through the House of Commons, and his hand can probably be detected in the drawing up of the bill in 1718 ‘for vesting the estate of James Price of Pillett [Joanna’s first husband] in trustees to pay several portions and legacies’. A further bill in 1722 vested in Uvedale Price of Foxley [Robert Price’s son], and Thomas Gears of Lincoln’s Inn the two moieties of James Price’s estate to be sold to pay out the legacies and charities mentioned in Lady Hartsonge’s will. By these charities, a house in Hereford was left to the Honourable Justice Price, who was charged with an annual allowance to the vicar and his successors for reading morning prayers every day. The family’s Beili Bedw estate in St. Harmon’s parish was also vested in Robert Price to provide the means ‘to put out some of the poor children of the parish of Llanelwedd as apprentices as he in his discretion thinks proper’. When Robert Price died in 1733, responsibility for the Beili Bedw estate passed to his son Uvedale, who also had the nomination of the schoolmaster to the Llanelwedd school, and on his death in 1764 it was again passed to his son and Robert’s grandson, then aged only seventeen. Thus the Prices’ connection with Radnorshire extended well into the eighteenth century.

Robert Price remained as recorder of New Radnor till his death in 1733, but the Harley family’s political interests in Radnorshire declined when Robert Harley (by then Lord Oxford) fell in 1714. In the new reign Crown patronage passed to their Whig rivals, on whom George I was dependent for parliamentary support. Lord Coningsby, Harley’s Herefordshire rival, was appointed steward of the Crown manors, which carried a weighty political interest, now inimical to Harley’s domination. Price may have found some consolation in the fact that Sir Humphrey Howorth of Maesllwch, whose wife was a Gwynne descendant, held the county seat between 1722 and 1754. It indicates the political mood that in 1718 Lord Coningsby, in a letter to the Earl of Sunderland, vowed to break the power of Lord Oxford, the Bishop of Hereford and Robert Price, whom he described as ‘the worst of judges’, a venomous verdict which was hardly corroborated by anyone else.⁶ In the eighteenth century the Radnorshire constituencies became the playground of aristocratic interests, notably that of the Duke of Chandos, who was accused by Howorth of abusing the power of the Crown as Lord Lieutenant of the county. Radnorshire politics were once again to become a subject of such interest as to arouse the attention of no less a pundit than Sir Lewis Namier.⁷ Such powerful interests overwhelmed more native interests such as those of the Gwynnes,

Marmaduke Gwynne being defeated in 1727 and Roderick Gwynne in 1741 at county elections.

NOTES

Much of the substance of this paper is based upon my Open University M.Phil thesis, 'An Assessment of the Political and Legal Career of Robert Price', 1998.

¹ RCB Oliver, 'The Hartsonges of Radnorshire', *Transactions of the Radnorshire Society*, (1973), pp. 34 ff.

² BD Henning, *History of Parliament: The 'House of Commons, 1660–1690*, (1983) I, sub New Radnor.

³ JA Downie, 'Robert Harley, Sir Rowland Gwynne and the New Radnor election of 1690', *Transactions of the Radnorshire Society*, (1976), pp. 10 ff.

⁴ *Historical Manuscripts Commission, Portland Report*, IV, p. 344.

⁵ I owe much of what follows to Mr Oliver's article (v. above).

⁶ RR Sedgwick, *House of Commons, 1715–1754*, (1970).

⁷ LB Namier, *The Structure of Politics at the Accession of George III*, (1957).

EDUCATION IN THE EDW VALLEY AND THE MYSTERY OF THE SCHOOL THAT NEVER WAS

Colin PF Hughes

The Edw Valley runs through a most beautiful part of Radnorshire from its source on Radnor Forest to its confluence with the River Wye at Aberedw. Its upper reaches, best seen from the A44 road as it winds its way down from Radnor Forest, affords one of the most spectacular views in the county, from Llandegley Rhos to Bettws Disserth and beyond.

In this idyllic valley, in the late nineteenth century, there was a struggle to create an organised system of elementary education. There were winners and there were losers in this struggle, as this article will show.

ABEREDW SCHOOL

Howse¹ informs us that a charity school had been held in Aberedw Church at the end of the eighteenth century. Robert Bevan² confirms that the 1818 Select Committee on Education had been informed that the Revd Thomas Morgan held a school for 20–30 children *gratuitously* at Aberedw Church. Revd Morgan had commented that ‘the poorer classes have not even the means of maintaining or clothing their children, but are very desirous to have them educated’.

However, it was much later in the nineteenth century that Aberedw had its permanent elementary school. Aberedw National School was built between 1869 and 1870 ‘in an early fourteenth century style’³ by JL Pearson, a nationally famous ‘Gothic architect’.⁴ The magnificent side window at Aberedw School bears testimony to Pearson’s skill.

The first log book of Aberedw National School (1871–1900)⁵ states that the school was opened on 17 January 1871, with just 12 children present. The Schoolmaster was Henry George Stephens, who recorded: ‘The children were very backward on account of no regular school having been established here before’. The school’s link with the church was quickly established, as the Revd Mr Russell visited the school on 19 January and its popularity soon increased: by 13 March, there were 41 pupils in attendance. However, the Schoolmaster must have been very frustrated by the slow progress of the pupils. On 28 April 1871, he recorded: ‘I kept six children in for idleness during the morning and made them do their work when the others had gone. Many children now leave the school to



Aberedw School

CPF Hughes

work in the fields and attend to the farms'. Such irregular attendance was typical of elementary school pupils, as noted by the 1872 Inspection Report:

This is comparatively speaking a new school, the few Children presented passed a fair and satisfactory examination in the Elementary subjects. The managers should try and desire some means to get the children to attend more regularly than at present.

Elementary education at this time struggled to compete with the needs of the farming calendar in rural areas. It also struggled to compete with other frequent reasons for absence: Builth June Fair; Tithe day; and 'Today we had the Radnorshire hounds at Aberedw'.⁶ Such log book entries reveal the multi-faceted side of rural life at the time! The behaviour of some of the children was also recorded. On 13 June 1873, the Schoolmaster Mr Stephens listed the names of 11 boys who were all late for school. Six of them had intended playing truant, he recorded, so he 'went after them and brought them all back. One boy, John Hamer, I had to punish on the way for insolence'. Mr Stephens does not record the method of punishment that he used! The 1873 Inspection Report confirmed that Aberedw National School still needed to make improvements:

The character of instruction in this little school was on the whole fair. The organisation was inferior. The Teacher should cultivate the habits of order and neatness.

Despite these strictures, Aberedw Voluntary Primary/Mixed National School continued to serve its tight-knit rural community until its closure in 1949 and the transfer of its pupils to Llanelwedd National School, and a start had been made on organised elementary education in the Edw Valley.

SCHOOL BOARDS

Forster's Education Act was passed in 1870. This aimed to create a national system of elementary education in England and Wales. Where no schools existed, School Boards were to be created to try to fill the gaps. In such a sparsely populated area as the Edw Valley, these School Boards were usually composed of the same members as the Boards of Guardians that had existed for some time. The new Board schools were likely to be dominated by Non-conformists, so there were many examples of the Church trying to establish more National Schools before the new Board Schools could be created. This was the case in the Upper Edw Valley!

In October 1874, the Revd T Macfarlane, Rector of Disserth with Bettws-Disserth, wrote his first letter to the Church of England National Society:⁷

Oct. 6 1874,
Radnorshire

Dear Sir,

I have a small outlying Parish in the county for which no School has ever been provided and in Feby. next an order (final) will be issued by the Education Department to annex a district of the neighbouring Parish of Glascwm – a School board to be elected and a Board School to be built. My little Parish, Bettws-Disserth, is almost entirely a Churchgoing community but the district of Glascwm which is to be united to it is almost entirely under the control of the Baptists & in the election will swamp the former. The Education Inspector has moreover fixed the site of the Board School in a little village of the Glascwm district called Frank's Bridge where there is scarcely a single representative of the Church party. I am very anxious to anticipate the final order of February next by in the meantime commencing to build a Voluntary School in Bettws Disserth. There is not however a single resident proprietor nor any one above the candidature of small farmers. These have mostly

large families and are utterly unable to help further than by contributing in the shape of haulage and labour &c. This they are most willing to do and are very desirous of having the School placed in their midst. I write therefore earnestly to beg the aid of your Society to enable me to carry out the wishes of myself and parishioners in this emergency, and a policy the simple effect of which will be to secure a National School for Bettws and to abolish the necessity for the proposed Board School altogether in the district of Glascwm – the children from which will be accommodated partly at Bettws, partly on the other site at Llansaintffread.

May I hope that you will lay the case, in the naked truth, before the Board and at your earliest convenience (for no time is to be lost) let me know whether I may hope for the countenance and support of those who disburse its funds? If you will further oblige me by saying to what probable extent they will do so, I shall feel grateful to you.

I am, Dear Sir,

Yours very truly

T. Macfarlane (Rector of Disserth w. Bettws-Disserth)⁸

One can see immediately that the Revd Macfarlane wanted to create a National School for Bettws in order to pre-empt the establishment of a Board School there. Mr Duncan, secretary of the National Society, responded the following day, recognising the urgency of the situation and suggesting that ‘as large a grant as the finances will allow’ would be forthcoming.⁹

Revd Macfarlane waited an anxious two months before writing again to the National Society, repeating the urgent circumstances:

Disserth, Llandrindod, Dec. 9 1874

Dear Sir,

I have already pointed out to you the very urgent circumstances under which I make an application to the Committee of the National Society for aid from their funds but in case my letter may have been lost sight of I here briefly epitomise them.

There is no resident landowner and the value of the living is small, there is no resident Clergyman. There is in fact no one but myself to influence the current of public feeling in favour of a voluntary provision of the means of Education. The final Order will be issued in February next for uniting the Parish of Bettws-Disserth with the Township of Drown (Parish of Glascwm) and for the two jointly to elect a School Board to build and manage a School for the District. Bettws is almost

entirely a Churchgoing Parish, but the Township of Drowen is entirely under the dominion of the Baptists and the population of the latter, outnumbering that of Bettws, in the ratio of two to one, would completely swamp us in the election of a Board. Further, the Board School would be in Drowen, a part of Glascwm which is more than five miles from the Incumbent's residence.

I seek therefore to build a National School in the parish of Bettws, thereby to attain two objects; Firstly, I shall have Education in my own Parish connected with the Church and Secondly, I shall keep out a Board from Drowen (no part of it being two miles from where I propose building) and so avoid what would be a permanent occasion for the exhibition of sectarian animosity.

The principal Landowner gives us a site close to the Church and building stone – both free. The parishioners will do all the haulage and unskilled labour. If therefore I could raise about £300 in money I should aim at a Teacher's residence as well as a School room. The Parish is very poor and I must look for the 'sinews of war' outside it.

I hope the Committee will see the importance and urgency of the case as I see it. They will I doubt not, help me as liberally as their funds will permit.

I am, dear Sir,
Very faithfully yours, T. Macfarlane

Revd Macfarlane must have been feeling more optimistic at this point because three days later, on 12 December 1874, he submitted an application to the National Society for aid to build a schoolroom for 70 children in the Parish of Bettws-Disserth. On 6 February 1875, he penned his third letter to the National Society, acknowledging the intimation of a grant:

Dear Sir,

I have received your intimation of a grant from the National Society towards the School in Bettws-Disserth – of £30 on conditions. I am truly thankful for this aid and shall take care that the conditions on which it is given shall be fully complied with.

I am, Dear Sir,
Very truly yours
T. Macfarlane

The grant was only £30, when a total of £300 was required. Even so, the Revd Macfarlane must have held high hopes that his school at Bettws would obviate the necessity for a Board School in the district.

Unfortunately for the Revd Macfarlane, there were ominous clouds on the horizon! A School Board for the district was created. This was the Cregrina United District School Board and it held its first meeting on 18 November 1875 at the [Colwyn] Court House, Hundred House.¹⁰ Mr George Henry Peel was the chairman and the Revd Thomas Macfarlane was the vice-chair and clerk.

The earliest meetings discussed whether there should be two or three schools built in the United School District. Mr James of Builth was appointed as architect and it was decided to build two schools – one in the south and one in the north of the District. Also, ‘the room adjoining the Church in the village of Glascomb (*sic*) be fitted up and provided with privies and separate and distinct approaches for boys and girls according to the recommendations of HMI’.¹¹

It was decided that Lower Llanedw would be the site for the southern school and Wendaruth Common, near Franksbridge, would be the site for the northern school, which would accommodate 60 pupils. At the March 1876 meeting of the School Board, the plans for the two new schools were accepted, as well as the alterations at Glascwm. Unfortunately for the Revd Macfarlane, the decision was taken not to take over the Bettws School. Despite two petitions from the parishioners of Bettws to the November meeting, requesting the Board to reconsider accepting the



Bettws School

CPF Hughes

Bettws School, the request was rejected. Only the Revd Macfarlane had been in favour; the four other members of the committee were against adopting Bettws School. Revd Macfarlane resigned from the committee of the School Board in protest and Bettws School became the school that never was. Revd Macfarlane penned his final letter to the National Society in December 1877, acknowledging defeat. His concluding paragraph summed up his bitter disappointment:

The Society's grant, like the other subscriptions promised me, is of course forfeited and all that now remains for me to do is to thank the Society for its kind and generous promise and to express the hope that I may be able some day to contribute to its funds – if it be but a mite. In the meantime my finances are so hampered that I can 'neither favour a friend nor fight an enemy'. Apologising for all the trouble I have given you.

LOWER LLANEDW SCHOOL

This was the first of the two Edw Valley Board Schools to open, on 1 October 1877. A site for this 'southern' school had been bought from Mr Walter Powell, Lower Llanedw, Rhulen. The tender (dated 8 September 1876) of Mr Thomas Evans, Builder, Cregrina, for building the school room and master's house – for £809 – was accepted, as long as the £9 was 'knocked off'! The buildings were to be completed by 1 November 1877.¹² In fact, Glanedw/Lower Llanedw Board School opened on 1 October 1877.

Mr Thomas Williams, formerly of Howey village school, was the Schoolmaster and there were 14 pupils in attendance. Nine of these pupils had previously received their elementary education at Cregrina (probably at the Baptist Chapel); three at Llansaintfread (which had opened in September 1876 with the neighbouring School Board); and two at Aberedw. Lower Edw School soon became popular, with 56 pupils in attendance by November 1877. School fees of 2d per child were to be levied. This was very reasonable. The school was visited on 23 July 1879 by Revd S Pryce HMI, who subsequently issued his report:

Only the children qualified by attendance were presented at the inspection. In future all the scholars should be present and the School in its usual working order, that the Inspector may judge of the Organization and discipline. A good examination was passed in Reading, a fair one in Handwriting and Spelling, and a pretty fair one only in Arithmetic. More pains should be taken with the Children's Copy



Lower Edw School

CPF Hughes

books. The 2nd Standard should write in Copy Books. The handwriting of the younger Children is capable of improvement. The children were not presented in any extra Subject. There is not a single map in the School. Neither is there a cupboard for the books. The drainage of the yard and floor of the Girls' Office should be improved.¹³

One of the criticisms of the report was addressed when Geography and Needlework were introduced as extra subjects in 1881 and History in 1882. Even so, the report was deemed to be unsatisfactory and the school was not given its due grant. Mr Thomas Williams resigned and was succeeded by Mr John R Howat, who had previously been at Llanbadarn Fawr Board School at Crossgates. However, Mr Howat served for only two years and frequent changeover of staff was a continuing and serious problem in the isolated rural schools, as the following list (with two exceptions) shows.

Teachers at Glanedw/Lower Llanedw Board School

Oct. 1877–Aug. 1879	Thomas Williams, CM, 3rd Class
Aug. 1879–Sep. 1881	John R Howat, CM, 2nd Class
Sep. 1881–Apr. 1882	Mary Anne Williams, CM, 2nd Class
Apr. 1882–Sep. 1885	Mary Govan, 2nd Class
Oct. 1885–1907 (retired)	Sarah Anne Hissey, 3rd Class

1907–1936	Mary Rees (retired)
Sep. 1936–Dec. 1937	William Austin Weale, B.Sc.
Mar. 1938–Sep. 1940	Thomas Davies
Nov. 1940–Jun. 1945	Robert Arthur Williams
Feb. 1946–1949	Margaret Bevan Jones
Sep. 1949–	Phyllis Maud Cox (Lloyd) ¹⁴

Mrs Cox may have served at the school until its closure in 1960. For more than eighty years, Rhulen School served its community faithfully. Many generations of children must have been very happy receiving their elementary education in such an idyllically situated environment.

FRANKSBRIDGE SCHOOL

This school was the direct competitor with Bettws School for the right to provide elementary education for the children in the upper Edw Valley. It is, of course, the only school in the area to remain open. Its struggle at its creation has certainly proved worthwhile.

In February 1876, the Cregrina United District School Board had decided that Wendruth Common, near Franksbridge, was to be the site for the northern school for the district, to accommodate 60 children. Negotiations took place for buying land for the site, firstly with the lord of the manor, Sir Joseph Bailey, and then with Mr Thomas Moore of the Old Hall. There were obviously problems with the negotiations because it was finally decided to move the site fifty yards further north than was originally intended.

In January 1877, the decision was taken to use the chapel at Franksbridge as a temporary school, until the Wendruth Common/ Franksbridge School was ready. Mr Bebb, Baptist minister, was put in charge. This was just two months after the two petitions from the parishioners of Bettws were received, asking for the adoption of Bettws School as the school for the north of the district. The Revd Macfarlane's fear that the Baptists would outnumber his churchgoing parishioners seems to have been justified!

The tender of Mr Thomas Evans, Builder, Cregrina, to build this northern school, was accepted at the February meeting of the School Board, at a cost of £693. However, a special meeting of the Board was later called because Mr Thomas Evans wanted an extra £100 for obtaining stone from the Llansaintfraed quarry. This was accepted and it was agreed that the buildings were to be completed by 1 November 1877. (It was at this point that the Revd Macfarlane resigned from the Board in protest. He realised that he had lost his battle for Bettws School to be adopted for the upper Edw Valley.)



Franksbridge School

CPF Hughes

Franksbridge School opened on 29 July 1878.¹⁵ The Schoolmaster was Mr Samuel Keighley, from Bingley, Yorkshire. 17 pupils were admitted on the first day but, by 1879, there were 57 pupils in attendance. The long wait for the creation of this school was proving worthwhile and the increasing numbers necessitated the appointment of an Assistant Mistress in July 1879. This was Miss AE Brown, an ex-Pupil Teacher from Bridlington. She also taught Needlework. By 1880, there were 69 pupils, in a school built to accommodate 60. There were 53 pupils in attendance when HMI reported in March 1880:

This School has been open since the end of July 1878 and some of the children have had no previous education at all. The discipline was very good, though I had to strike off the Examination Schedule, 2 small boys in the First Standard for copying. The work was done with great care, neatness and accuracy. The school has made an Excellent Start and I only hope that Mr Keighley will fully maintain its efficiency. Great credit is due to Miss Brown for the good service she has rendered in the School, and particularly for the efficient manner in which she has taught the Needlework. The attendance is disgraceful and I trust that the Board will at once take steps to improve it. Several Children in this District do not go to school at all.

Yet again, school attendance was proving to be a problem. The Cregrina United District School Board attempted to address the problem by appointing Mr Charles Williams as School Attendance Officer. He made his first visit to Franksbridge School on 15 April 1880. Did his presence have a positive effect? The 1881 HMI Report stated:

The attendance is worse proportionately than it was last year and especially that of the Children who live within a moderate distance of the School. The attainments of the children have deteriorated, especially in Arithmetic. Discipline is good and some of the handwriting is neat and well formed. Another window is required in the back wall of the School as the school is dark in winter. A clock should be procured.

Attendance continued to be a problem, here as elsewhere. However, these were early days in the history of Franksbridge School and by 1882 HMI reported that attendance had improved. This scattered and isolated rural community was getting used to its new school and was to build on this rather faltering start to create a very successful educational facility which endures to this very day.

This article shows the sacrificial attempts of one person – the Revd Thomas Macfarlane – to establish organised education in the upper reaches of a very isolated and remote Radnorshire valley. It resulted in his financial ruin and the creation of the school that never was. However, the efforts of this one determined man may have been the catalyst for the newly-created School Boards of the 1870s to ensure that they provided an enduring system of education in such a remote area, a system which created access to education which very many generations of Edw Valley families have enjoyed and still do, thanks to the continued existence of Franksbridge School.

NOTES

¹ WH Howse, *Radnorshire*, (Radnorshire Society, 1973), p. 122.

² Robert Bevan, 'Radnorshire Schools in 1818', TRS, 60 (1990), p. 37.

³ Richard Haslam, *The Buildings of Wales: POWYS*, (Penguin Books/U W Press, 1973), p. 217.

⁴ John Loughborough Pearson (1817–1897) was renowned for his work on churches and cathedrals. Truro Cathedral (1880) was his most significant work, but he also had care of Lincoln, Chichester, Peterborough, Bristol and Exeter cathedrals. Treberfydd House (1850) at Llangasty Talyllyn is another example of his local work. He is buried in Westminster Abbey.

⁵ Powys Archives: R/E/PS/2/L/1.

⁶ Ibid. 21 April 1873.

⁷ The National Society for promoting the education of the poor in the principles of the Established Church, founded in 1811.

⁸ I am grateful to Squadron Leader Trevor Powell and to Mrs Elizabeth Powell, the present owners of ‘Bettws Cottage’, for providing me with this information, which they received from the Church of England Record Centre.

⁹ Letter from I. Duncan, Secretary of the National Society, to Revd Macfarlane (7 October 1874).

¹⁰ Cregrina United District School Board Minute Book, 1875–1902, Powys Archives: R/E/SB/1/M/1.

¹¹ Ibid. 26 January 1876.

¹² Ibid. 8 September 1876.

¹³ Glanedw/Lower Llanedw Board School, Rhulen, Log Book, 1877–1926, Powys Archives: R/E/PS/12/L1.

¹⁴ Glanedw Board School Attendance Register, 1877–1957, Powys Archives: RE/PS/12/R/1.

¹⁵ Franksbridge School Log Book, 1878–1921, Powys Archives: RE/PS/47/L1.

THE WILL OF DAME PERYNNE CLANVOWE

MC Seymour

About 1400 wills in England and Wales began to be drafted in English rather than in Latin or French. Among the earliest examples of this linguistic change which survive is the will of Dame Perynne Clanvowe, widow of Sir Thomas Clanvowe of Yazor, Herefordshire, who died in 1422. It is an interesting document, shedding much light on the lady and her times, and repays examination.

Perynne Whitney was born c.1370, the eldest daughter of Sir Robert Whitney of the distinguished Marcher family at Whitney in the Huntington hundred of Herefordshire.¹ The Whitneys were neighbours and close friends of another distinguished Marcher family headed by Sir John Clanvowe.² Sir Robert became a knight of Richard II's household, served in the wars in France, and in 1394 was appointed Marshal of the Household. Perynne had three brothers and at least one sister. As a result of her father's standing at court she became in 1390 a *domicella*, a junior lady-in-waiting, to Queen Anne, and her appointment was marked by the grant of an annuity of £10 on 26 May 1390.³

At court at the same time was her young neighbour Thomas Clanvowe, then a squire of the household. Both youngsters had a common political and religious background and both shared a common cultural interest as members of the courtly audience for Chaucer's poetry. When in October 1391 Sir John Clanvowe died Thomas inherited his lands and property and within a year, before 2 October 1392, married his young neighbour. His courtship survives in a poem, 'The Cuckoo and the Nightingale', which offers Perynne the romantic courtesy of a young lover to his intended bride on St. Valentine's Day.⁴

The first year of their marriage saw an increase in their prosperity. Thomas accompanied Richard II to Ireland on his expedition of conquest and reconciliation from 1394 to May 1395, and was knighted there. On his return he was sworn as a Justice of the Peace for Herefordshire, with Sir Robert Whitney and eight others, and in November 1397 was appointed sheriff of the county, as his uncle Thomas had been in 1348. During this decade he served as a knight of the shire in the Parliaments of 6 March 1394 for forty-five days, of 12 February 1397 for twenty-eight days, and of 31 January 1398 for twenty-seven days. After Queen Philippa died on 7 June 1394 Perynne returned to Herefordshire. In 1397 she was appointed *domicella* to Queen Isabella, the child bride of Richard II and

daughter of Charles VI of France, whom Richard had married by proxy in March 1396.

This time of peace was shattered by Bolingbroke's invasion and his deposition of Richard II in 1399. Sir Robert Whitney joined Bolingbroke's forces and thus ensured his favour after his coronation as Henry IV. But within three years Peryne lost her office in the Queen's household, much of her property, her father, and for four anxious months her husband. In 1400 Welsh rebels destroyed Buelt (the source of the Clanvowe annuities) and much of their lands and lordships. In June 1402 her husband was captured along with Edmund Earl of Mortimer by Owain Glyn Dwr at Pilleth, near Knighton, Radnorshire, and her father Sir Robert Whitney was killed there. When Mortimer married the daughter of Owain Glyn Dwr in November 1402, Sir Thomas was released. Thereafter, as the Welsh rebellion was crushed and the king's peace was re-established, the Clanvowes lived for the most part at Hergest. Until his death at Yazor in June 1410 Sir Thomas acted as a Justice, serving on various commissions and maintaining contact with friends at court: Sir Philip de la Vache (d.1408), Sir William Beauchamp (d.1411), Sir John Cheyne (d.1413) and Sir Lewis Clifford (d.1404), all of whom were sympathetic to the pious tenets of the Lollards.

In her widowhood Dame Peryne maintained this quiet piety, living partly in London and partly on her manors in Herefordshire. There is no record of any children of the marriage. Though the lands Sir Thomas held in tenancy reverted on his death to his feudal lords, life interest in the lands and manors which he held in fee simple passed to his widow,⁵ and she enjoyed a comfortable inheritance as the dowager of a well-known Marcher family. She died in London in November 1422, having lived through the turmoil of the reigns of three kings (Richard II, Henry IV, Henry V). Her will survives in the copy found in the Prerogative Court of Canterbury, (March folio 429 verso), and is here transcribed slightly modernized in spelling and punctuation. In her will she gives her name as Clanbowe, a genuine variant form of Clanvowe, which is now accepted as the preferred spelling.⁶

TESTAMENT DOMINE PERYNE CLANBOWE

In the name of the fader and of the son and of the holy gost, Amen. The thridde day of Aprill in the yer off Our Lord 1422 I Peryne Clanbowe, being in good memory, thenkyng on my laste ende, havyng Gode in forsyght, I have maad and ordened this my present testament and my last wylle in the forme that foloweth.

First I bequeath and commend my saule to Gode my maker and my sauour and to hys blyssyd moder gloriouse vyrgyn and to all saintes, and my body to be beryd at Yasore be my lord my housbond if I dye in Herefordshire and elliswhere that Gode hath ordeined for me. And as son as yt may be don godly after that I hame dede, porelych to be beryed withoute gret cost doon therupon.

Also I will and ordeine that all my dettes that may be prowede be good conscience due that they be principaly payde in all hast that it may be.

Also I bequeath to cloth wyth 200 poor men £20.

Also I bequeath to amende brygges and foule wayes £10.

Also I bequeath to Sir Robert of Whitney my brother a slate basyn and an ewer and 6 disshes, 6 saucers, and 2 chargeours of seluer [large plates of silver].

Also I bequeath to the seme Robert a vestment of rede cloth of gold with my massebooke and chalys. The wych vessel, vestment, massebooke, and chalys aforseyd to the forsaide Robert bequethen, I wole that he have them upon this condicion, that he be good frend to my executours and that he lete them not off ministracion off myn other goode on the manere of Ocle Pychard ne elleswhere.

Also I bequeath to myn aunte prioress of Limebrook 40 shillings.

Also I bequeath myn awnte Corbet 40 shillings.

Also I bequeath to Sir Ion Skidmore my newewe a girdell of peerles.

Also I bequeath to Jane myn nece to her marriage or when sche is of age £20.

Also I bequeath to Peryne her suster, my god doutghter in the same forme £10.

And if it so be that the forsaide Jane and Peryne dye befor that they come to age or ellys maried, then I will that the mony of either of them so deede turn to the use of her sisters ouerlyuyng in the same fourme. And if all the sisters dye ar they come to age or be maryed, that then the money tourn to the use of her bretheren ouerlyuyng. And if all the brethervyn die within age of 16 yeere, then the mony be disposed in almesdeddes by my executours.

Also I bequeath to Jankyn Myles my servant £20 and myn eche dayes gowne of marterount.

Also I beueth to Sir Johan Coyle one pare of bedes of corall.

Also I bequeth to Elisabeth Joye £10 and a booke of Englyssh cleped *Poor Caylife* and one gown furred with grey miniver.

Also I bequeth to Jonet Okbourn 10 marks and my Sauter helid with blake and a gown furred with cristy grey.

Also I bequeth to Jankyn Huchecoke 5 marks.

Also I bequeth to Jankyn Tailour 5 marks.

Also I bequeth to David Morays 40 shillings.

Also I bequeth to Luysote 40 shillings.

Also I bequeth to the wyffe of Jankyn Miles a gown furred with besshe.

Also I bequeth to David Cradoke 13 shillings and fourpence.

Also I bequeth to James and to his wife 10 shillings.

Also I bequeth to the chirch of Yasore fore my lord and his auncetres to serve in the chirch a peire vestimentis of blake, wheroft the same chirch hath the cope. Also I bequeth to what thenge that is most necessary in the same chirch 5 marks.

Also I bequeth to Jonet Knolles a stondyng cuppe of silver gilte couered.

Also I bequeth to John Thomas a cuppe of silver playn with the scripture of Seynt Jon.

Also I bequeth to two prestes, honest men and good lives and ellys not, to do diuine servise for my lord and me for on yer anoon after my decees resonable lyvelode after the discrecion of myn executours.

Also I bequeth to Sir Reynold my prest 4 quaires of *Doctours on Mathewe*.

The residue for soth of all my goodes in this my testament not bequethen I yeve and bequeethe to myn executours be her discrecion to be disposyde, that oon halfe to my pore tenuantz and that other halfe to god men faithfull and nedys that ben in disese.

And to the execucion of this my testament and my last will to be fulfilled I ordeyn my trusty frendes Jankyn Miles, Thomas Knolles aforsaid, Elisabeth Joy, Jonet Okborne and John Tailour, myne executours be these presentes, as they woll aunswer afor Gode. Also I

bequeth to ich of myn executors takyng charge of ministracion of this my testament 5 marks and reward for her costages when they labour specially for my maters.

Into wytnessyng of which thyng, to this my present testament I have put to my seel, yeven at London, day moneth and yer aforsayd.

This will was proved before Master John Estcourt sitting in London on 18 November 1422. In its piety and charities it reflects the sober earnestness of the gentry who supported the tenets of the Lollard priests, the so-called Lollard Knights. This sobriety is reinforced by the bequest of two orthodox books sympathetic to Lollard concerns, the *Poor Caitiff* and the *Short Matthew*, alongside her Psalter and her Mass-book. The first was a collection of fourteen tracts compiled at Oxford between 1384 and 1401 for the literate laity. Its author was a priest, probably a university teacher, who made use of the English Bible and other contemporary Lollard writings including the *Short Matthew*.⁷ The second, unbound in four quires, was a combined gloss on the gospel of St. Matthew, so named to distinguish it from the *Long Matthew*, and was also compiled at Oxford during the initial academic phase of Lollardy.⁸ Both books probably belonged to Dame Perynne's husband Sir Thomas, and he may have had them from Sir John Clanvowe (d.1391), who wrote a short treatise on vice and virtue.⁹

Alongside this defining piety are charities to family, servants and public relief. Her eldest brother Sir Robert Whitney (d.1441 and succeeded by his brother Eustace) was given her silver plate and, with a telling proviso, religious items, and Sir John Scudamore her nephew a girdle of pearls. Other members of her family received gifts of money, a token 40 shillings to her aunt Corbet and her aunt Perynne, prioress of St. Mary's at Limebrook, Hereford (a small convent of Augustinian canonesses), and larger sums to her young nieces Jane and Perynne Scudamore.

Bequests to her servants are largely gifts of money, nicely calculated to reward their service, but they include four furred gowns, one of 'marterount' (martin fur), another of 'grey miniver' (squirrel), and two others of 'cristy grey' and 'besshe' of uncertain texture, possibly crest of the fur of badger and doe skin. (Cf. OED sub *grey* B sb 2 and *bisse* and *miniver*).

Her public charities, though conventional for a lady of the manor, are substantial: £20 to clothe the poor; £10 to repair bridges and roads; and the residue to her poor tenants and other distressed men. In all, her bequests of money total £112 and ten shillings, excluding the residue at the discretion of the executors and their honoraria.

Her will is thus as much a testament to her character as to her worldly goods. Exceptionally pious and caring, she did not set great store by possessions, leaving only some plate, four gowns, a girdle of pearls, a pair of coral beards, and two devout books. Fragmentary though the surviving evidence is, her life is a record worth preserving.¹⁰

NOTES

¹ J Duncomb (ed.), *Collections of Hereford IV*, (1897), pp. 77–78.

² *Transactions of the Radnorshire Society LXXV*, (2005), pp. 35–58.

³ *Calendar Patent Rolls*, (1391–96), p. 183.

⁴ The poem of 290 lines survives in five copies, only one of which has ‘Explicit Clanvowe’. It is a Chaucerian imitation full of his literary devices: an ageing and humorous narrator reports a debate between Cuckoo and Nightingale on the nature of love, which the former finds irrational and the latter ennobling.

⁵ The Clanvowe patrimony in Herefordshire included the lordship of Hergest, the manor of Ocle Pritchard and sixty-five acres at Yazor, each of which carried a fraction of a knight’s fee, the feudal obligation to provide and equip twenty men for forty days of military service.

⁶ FJ Furnivall (ed.), *Fifty Early English Wills*, (EETS 78, 1882), pp. 49–51. The will of Sir Thomas Clanvowe is recorded in Lambeth Palace Register II f.50. Both wills are held at Somerset House. See C Kightly, ‘Early Lollards’, (PhD York, 1975), pp. 193–97.

⁷ PS Jolliffe, *Checklist of the ME Prose Writings of Spiritual Guidance*, (Toronto, 1974), pp. 65–67 lists thirty manuscripts and several excerpts and fragments. The book is edited from BL MS Harley 2336 by MT Brady, (PhD Fordham, 1954). Also see his articles in *Traditio* 10, 1954, 529 and 44 (1988) 389 and *Speculum* 32 (1957) 323. Cf. AE Hartung, *A Manual of the Writings in Middle English IX* (1933), pp. 3135–36 and 3470.

⁸ Extant in BL MS Additional 41175. Cf. Jolliffe and Hartung, loc.cit.

⁹ *Transactions of the Radnorshire Society*, loc. cit. Sir John died intestate. Sir Thomas did not mention the book in his will.

¹⁰ CM Barron and AF Sutton, *Medieval London Widows 1300–1500*, (London, 1994).

TWO ESSAYS BY FFRANSIS G PAYNE

Translated and introduced by Dr Ifan Payne

INTRODUCTION

The opening paragraph of *Crwydro Sir Faesyfed* (Exploring Radnorshire) is at the same time both courageous and sad. This paragraph is fundamental to understanding a central tragedy of the life and work of its author, Ffransis George Payne: that of being a writer that few could read, speaking a language that few could understand, and living a life that few could appreciate. There are surely not many authors who would set out to write their *magnum opus*, the culmination of their life's work, knowing that very few people could ever read it. So the book is a tribute to his convictions regarding the importance of Welsh life, culture and language. Thus the opening paragraph of *Crwydro Sir Faesyfed* starts:

I knew before writing it that this would be a book for the residents of the other counties. Very few of the population of Radnorshire are able to read it. According to the 1951 Census, out of a population of less than twenty thousand just a few over eight hundred can speak Welsh, and I am sure that most of those are incomers.

To place this in perspective, in 1951 a total of only 714,666 people in Wales, or 29% of the population, could speak Welsh, a decline from 50% in 1921. That percentage would fall further to 20.8 % in 2001, the last year for which statistics are available.

The author writes the history and culture of a region, knowing that few will ever read it and even fewer will appreciate the lifetime's scholarship that contributes to this profoundly important cultural history. He was a visionary in this field that he believed very few would ever appreciate. So it must have been with a heavy heart that he continued, 'Surely the influence of this will be seen on the contents and nature of the book, since I will not be travelling with the people of Radnorshire but with the people of other counties'.

Yet the thought that few would ever read his words did not deter Ffransis Payne from writing in a graceful, conversational style which is a far cry from the style of writing to be found in his essays, 'Nyrse Bull' (Nurse Bull) and 'Chwaryddion Crwydrol' (Itinerant Players). These essays are snapshots of real events in his life and he once said that his

purpose was to describe what he saw and what he thought as accurately as possible. This to some extent explains why he crafted his essays slowly, seeking the right word to convey just the right shade of meaning, as though sculpting his descriptions of everyday life out of the language itself.

Both ‘Chwaryddion Crwydrol’ and ‘Nyrse Bull’ were originally published in book form in a collection of Payne’s essays in 1943.¹ The style of writing in ‘Nyrse Bull’ seems influenced by the author’s study of mediaeval Welsh poetry and also by his love of nineteenth-century Welsh Non-conformist sermons. Though highly descriptive, the language is formal, literary, tightly knit and economic and uses many arcane and compound words. It seems appropriate to describing this style that, in reviewing the book in *Y Faner*,² Saunders Lewis wrote (in translation): ‘His book to me is like a mature old wine that is to be sipped slowly and appreciatively, in quiet and sophisticated company, one winter’s evening, like a bottle of Cockburn 1912’. With the greatest admiration and affection, the date of the vintage seems appropriate.³

While also written in a similar literary, economic style, the writing in ‘Chwaryddion Crwydrol’ is somewhat more fluid. However, both essays contain sentences that are, from an English point of view, grammatically complex, and whose sense is difficult to render into English without deviating from the original sentence structure.

The choice here is between, on the one hand, accuracy in translating the written word with its cryptic syntax and, on the other, re-writing to the degree necessary to create a work of idiomatic English. The choice has been made to render the text as accurately as possible in terms of syntax and word order so as to try and convey the flavour of the original style. Significant deviations for the sake of clarity of meaning are noted in the footnotes.

NOTES

¹ *Chwaryddion Crwydrol ac Ysgrifau Erraill*, Y Clwb Llyfrau Cymraeg, Gwasg Gee, 1943.

² ‘Clasur Newydd i’n Hiaith’ (A New Classic for our Language), *Y Faner*, 22 September, 1943.

³ For a discussion of Ffransis Payne’s writing style, as well as a useful traversal of his life and work, see Marged Haycock, ‘The scholarship and creativity of Ffransis G Payne’, *Transactions of the Radnorshire Society*, Vol. 74 (2004), pp. 25–49.

NURSE BULL

Ffransis G Payne

That isn't her real name but it will do as a pseudonym for a woman who insisted on her own way, as intransigent as a bull. I prefer her alias. I would be too timid to discuss her if she were still alive. And somehow she becomes more amenable when I thrust a single slender thread of my imagination into her robust blood. I can think of her more confidently, as though she were the imperfect creation of my own imagination.

But like a creation of the gods, like a thunderbolt from the hand of Zeus himself, she descended on the town. It was a hot summer's day. The naked street was basking in the sun like a dusty snake, the shops on either side asleep beneath the black shadows of their white blinds. There was neither movement nor sound. Then, with the suddenness of one powerful stride, Nurse Bull had rounded the corner, the street all abuzz like a vigilant viper.

She was a huge, broad-shouldered, powerful woman: an heroic woman, as the saying goes. Her face was powerful and tranquil as if it belonged to a classical statue. The sun and the wind had turned her skin as golden as the abundant hair that coiled loosely about the nape of her neck. She wore about her a long blue cloak and on her head was a blue nurse's cap with a sort of veil behind it. Her large yellow hands were grasping a pram and she was pushing it along with all her might. Like a powerful navvy with a wheelbarrow, except that she was more nimble. The veil and edges of her cloak were fluttering behind her owing to the speed of her energetic movement. She went through the narrow street like a copper-coloured Britannia escaping bondage to the penny.

Inquisitive heads appeared one after another along the street as though they were being sucked out by a whirlwind. Then Thomas the butcher ventured to the pavement in his blue apron. Opposite him there is Meredith the ironmonger in his black apron. Further along there is Lewis the baker in his white apron and, within a short while, the chemist languidly pushed his bald head out of his shop. His standing, in his own opinion, being somewhere between a shopkeeper and a doctor, teetering on the fringe of the privileged class as it were, the chemist was not wearing an apron and he was not in as much of a hurry to feed his curiosity. After all, a nurse who had a pram could not stay in the town without coming into his shop sooner or later.

An inquisitive curiosity – that was the effect of her statuesque splendour on me. Seeing her rushing past, 'from where' and not 'to where'

was the question. The mind flashed back and caught her at the beginning of her journey, jumping down from her granite column in some public park and, lacking a war chariot, grabbing the pram nearest to her and fleeing.

During the following days it was revealed that the pram contained two handsome, curly-headed boys. It was learned that Nurse Bull was the name of this giant of a woman, and that it was not comfortable to look straight into her pallid blue-grey eyes. Because of the hue of her skin the large eyes shone palely like water. But they were piercing, pouring a wary stream of dignity and disdain. After casting a glance at you a hint of a smile slipped from her eyes and down her nose and disappeared before reaching her lips. A gypsy look. But she had the voice of one who had lived in a house, and an aristocratic house at that. A snobbish voice with the intonation of the mistress of that house and the over-careful enunciation of the best sort of maid.

This woman was an acquisition to the nosey people of the town. For some time there had not been placed before them a puzzle as difficult or as intriguing to solve. Here was a woman who challenged the imagination and kindled in you distinctive feelings. Gentleness, goodness, malice, cruelty, fun – she tested every form of these before she had stayed a month in the town. Her misfortune was that she arrived amongst us soon after the ‘man with the bike’ disappeared. That fellow had lived in the town for three months. The man was odd looking and he wore strange clothes that were wrapped around him as tightly as his skin. But the strangest thing about him was his bike. That was dressed in the manner of its owner. Ribbons of grey paper had been twisted tightly around every part of it except only for the circles of the wheels. Wherever the man went, his bike went with him. He was never seen riding. He pushed it continually. Sometimes he placed it against the edge of the pavement and admired it quietly for a quarter of an hour. No one got a word of explanation from him. All this enraged the busybodies.

And now, their curiosity unsatisfied, here is Nurse Bull rushing around just as taciturnly. Besides, she was a woman, and therefore defenceless. The pram was not a comfort to her as the bike had been to the other creature. The pram was the first object of attack by the sharp tongues which are more poisonous in a small town than in any other place. It was said that either it was her children that were in the pram and she was unmarried, or else they were not her children and that she was a ‘farmer of babies’. And, with reason, the ‘Nurse’ in her name was but a sort of courtesy title. The gossipy people whispered every possible story on these subjects. At the same time kind and helpful people were planning in their

warm hearts for the true situation. Be that as it may, there were so many plans prepared that one of them must serve when the request came. In the meantime the woman was as self-contained as a bronze statue. Her children were clean and happy; there was no doubting that their mother, or their nurse, doted on them.

I do not know whether all of this was evident to that robust lady. Impossible that so much planning and plotting surrounded her without her knowing anything about it. But she took not the slightest notice in the world of either scowl or smile. She pushed the pram for miles every day, with the appearance of an energetic visitor who was enjoying her visit. Every morning she came from the awful court¹ where she lived, and strode through the town while talking with the children in a clear, conceited voice. When she looked at them there was on her face the look of a woman, the look of a mother perhaps. When she lifted her head again her face would be as the face of a military bronze goddess. She would ignore the people on the pavement, ignore them so completely that she betrayed how intensely she felt the relentless staring. When she went into a shop she spoke in a manner that put the shopkeeper in his place and kept him there. I saw her often standing over some man or other as unwavering as a church tower. Her pale, contemptuous eyes were a kind of reproach to him so that it would be better for him to keep his thoughts unspoken. Some of the men in the town went crazy because of it. They knew instinctively that they were of ordinary clay and that she was as coarse as they were under her calm, golden skin. ‘She knows everything about everything,’ said Lewis the baker. ‘I bet she can swear like a tinker and fight like a gypsy, but here she is placing her penny ha’pny orders like . . . like . . .’ And he could not find words to soothe emotions that had been aroused and cooled by one defiant and contemptuous look. Nurse Bull was not so defenceless after all.

One day she made a mistake: she came out to the street bare-headed. It was strange how much less severe and inflexible in appearance she was without her nurse’s cap on her head. People looked on her anew. In truth, after she had gone past some would turn to look scornfully after her. There was an unexpected appearance of defencelessness to the bare yellow-haired head above the long blue cloak. I believed that she looked tired and not nearly as regal. I had no fear of staring at her, and I noticed that her cloak was old and was losing its colour and that her large shoes were shapeless.

As time passed the woman became more and more slovenly. Until the day when she walked through the street without her cloak. That day she was a kind of muscled, mongrel gypsy pushing her pram along the narrow

pavement. That and nothing else. People stood in her way discussing her with each other. It was obvious, they said, that she was no longer receiving the money for the children. The children should be taken from her and placed under the care of someone, sometime. However she was still the same Nurse Bull even though she did not look the same. Her uniform had been like a strong wall around her, and when that dress vanished there was nothing to be seen except an untidy woman with a superior voice. A wonderful example of a woman, no doubt, but, according to some, a woman too proud to turn her magnificence into an advantage to herself. Nurse indeed! they said, turning their backs on her.

But there was to be no turning your back on that woman. One day my brother came into the house out of breath with the strangest story. Nurse Bull was on the street ‘wearing nothing but a curtain’. So to the street I went. The ‘nothing but’ was an exaggeration, but still it is true that she was wearing an embroidered curtain. I laughed. And that is laughter that I wish I could blot out if that were possible. Because, despite it being funny, I only ever saw one sight more splendid.

I said that she was heroic in her manner. If I were an artist bent on picturing Hera, the partner of Zeus, the symbol of the hidden strength of women worldwide, in all her traditional dignity, this woman would be in front of my mind’s eye. My whole purpose would be to attempt to capture some of her strength and wealth and greatness as she progressed in her long curtain without looking at anyone or anything except the two fairest-skinned children that I had ever seen. With the curtain the old splendour returned. It brought a greater pride than before. It was inexplicable.

Regrettably the town’s folk did not have the hearts of artists. Their hearts were ordinary enough, gentle and hard by turn as hearts will be. But that day they were soft and flint-like at the same time. They were melted by the sweet little children and turned to stone by the old, shameless, slovenly slut! How moral and self-righteous and meddling a crowd of people can be. The public beak was thrust into the nest at the far end of the court. But nothing could be done. It was not possible to find any sign of mistreatment on the children. They were as fat as little pigs and as clean as fish. And as for the strange dress of the woman, all that could be said was that it was longer and looser than the fashion, and more appropriate.

No explanation of the curtain was received even though it adorned the street every day. It was generally supposed that the Nurse dressed like that in order to challenge the town. It was but another way of showing her independence and disdain for all of us. And somehow the kindest of people could not put up with the curtain. Their plans were postponed. A pity that they did not look more closely at the children’s clothes, and see

how the woman had taken her own rags and tailored them one by one for them. There was nothing left to do but to pull down the curtain and wear it. The children first every time. It was necessary to dress them decently, and it was necessary to take them out to the fresh air as usual. A simple enough explanation.

The time soon came when the Nurse could not obtain food to give to the children. That meant that she herself had been starving for some time. She'd been brave enough then to try and get rid of them and place them in the poorhouse. That was what was urged on her at the time of the business about the curtain. But she did not know at that time how attractive the idea would appear before long. She was frightened of the impersonal atmosphere of the public institution and the shame that would come from failure. At that time she had not experienced the full heat of the persecuting enthusiasm of individuals. But now she knew it all, and the walls of the House shone in her imagination like the walls of the New Jerusalem. But if it is difficult to accept the advice that was rejected by you, it is even more difficult to receive from people a second offer of help after you have contemptuously refused it. Especially when those who would help had been spiteful to begin with. So that's the same nasty spirit which finds a number of reasons to refuse to open the door of our poorhouse to her foreign children. At that the woman lost herself completely. There was some story or other about her abroad every day. One man with some authority received quite some pleasure by relating how the Nurse came to him and placed the two small boys to stand before him. 'Feed my lambs,' said she in a preaching voice, while spreading her arms like a windmill. But the door of mercy stayed closed.

But amongst two thousand people there will be a number of good ones, and through their efforts another lodging was found for the woman, and enough to support her while the 'situation was being considered'. It was really difficult to do much, because by now the woman was like a lioness with one paw on her cubs, mistrusting everyone and everything as she waited for the door to open. It was another door that was opened despite that: she was thrown out of her lodgings one night. Once again it was my brother who pulled me into the street. 'Come down to the bridge,' he said. 'This is the strangest sight ever!' True the word. I had seen some unfortunate being thrown from his house once before. A sad sight that I wish to forget. But let me not forget anything of the splendour of this woman who pulled her world on her head as knowingly as some Samson of yore.

At the far end of the bridge, where the road widens, there was a semi-circle of people standing to the side. They stood in the gloom silently looking down like mourners around a grave. Against the stone parapet of

the bridge, hemmed in by the crowd, were Nurse Bull and the children and all their belongings. There were not many belongings; only a bed and pram and a small pile of odds and ends. Nurse Bull was placing the bed by the side of the road when I arrived. After spreading a blanket or two on it she sat down, took the children to her one after the other and pulled off their clothes, while talking with them quietly all the time. Then, with the children warm in the bed, the woman searched in the gloom for a saucepan and a can of milk. She placed a small methyl stove on top of a box and lit it. Then, she sat on the side of the bed again and reached the saucepan over the thin, pale flame. She took no notice of us. But, suddenly, I started to become aware of myself. I felt as insignificant and as shameless as a piece of wallpaper on the wall of a strange bedroom, pasted tight between similar pieces. I became aware of sides and elbows about me; the crowd was multiplying and pressing together. The gloom was becoming dark with a cold tinge to the breeze.

Someone spoke. Minds were at work, and the crowd was swaying like a grove of trees in the evening. In the middle, as though in a quiet clearing, sat the woman with her head bent over the thin, unsteady flame. She was as still as the goddess of the grove with the pale blue flame of her altar throbbing alongside and lighting her quiet, sculpted face. Beyond in the darkness the river was taking over the night by roaring raucously between the rocks and gurgling under the arches of the bridge.

Suddenly angry voices broke out across each other. The scene inside the dark circle was like a shadowy mirror, and every one with something to say as he recognized in himself some of her impudence and stubbornness. But even though the crowd perceived its own emotions scattered in the mirror, it could not coalesce and unite to express them in the tradition of the town. Neither a clod nor stone was thrown. I never saw a group of people so helpless or a prey so fearless. Yesterday the woman had been hysterical and they like stones; tonight they were all boiling and she unmoving, back on her pedestal giving her most perfect performance.

The thin flame flutters like an eager brush brightly painting her on the blackness of the night. A quick touch, and there is her wide brow shining above her shaded eyes. One more and her strong chin is captured. Light is drawn over her cheeks and down her straight nose. The bone structure is illuminated; the hollows of the flesh are washed over with skilful glazes that blend together. The sharp flame stabs against the dark, forming and portraying her strong, unmoving face with a myriad fleeting fickle touches. A transient beauty is created and framed between the agitation of the crowd and the river, a picture that is soon soiled by dirty fingers on the clean edges. The police have arrived and the situation is in hand.

Nurse Bull arose and quietly welcomed them and her words descended on the darkness as from a high tower. Then she picked up the children in their blankets and placed them in the pram. It was not possible to see her face in the dark, but it was possible to imagine her mocking smile disappearing down her nose as she turned to follow the sergeant up the steep road, her own road, towards the poorhouse.

NOTES

¹ This is a strange word to use in this context. The Welsh word used is *cwrt* (court, yard). However, both the author's sons recall him pointing out to them independently the house which Nurse Bull actually occupied: the old stone toll house in Kington.

ITINERANT PLAYERS¹

Ffransis G Payne

We were talking about the drama. 'When I was a boy,' said the old man, 'I saw a performance in a tent presented by a company of itinerant players. I never saw better acting by anyone since then. Those people could break your heart with one silent gesture . . .' I ventured to agree – too heartily perhaps. Because he fumed angrily: 'Agree indeed! What do you know about them? People like that came to an end long before you were born.' But the friend was mistaken. Yes, I saw itinerant players, and got a wounded heart also.

I would not have seen them if our town had not been a small, rural town. You know the kind of place it is: a place like Brecon or Builth Wells or Knighton. Small, quiet places, aren't they? But, yet, towns where life is varied and complex. It is much easier to categorize the life of London, England, or of Little London in the Vale of Aeron. Because in a town like our town you live on the edge, indeed on many edges. Not only on the edge between a small town and the countryside; but on the edge between a small town and a town, and also the one that is between a town and a city. Because in a small country town you get elements of all the others. Some elements are an eternal fact such as the apple trees in your garden, or the west wind bringing the scent of the bracken on the hills to the narrow street. Some others are late intrusions like the branch of the railway from the eastern towns, and some others, like City Life,² a frivolous inspiration from afar.

Many people will turn their backs on such a place as soon as possible. They leave for a way of life which they had previously enjoyed, either

through experiencing as much of it as had trickled into our small town, or because they had once experienced it on a visit elsewhere. However, is not a small town a wonderful place that it can suggest to those who live in it the richness and the variety of life of other worlds?³ And there is given to the small town one of the rarest of things: time does not move quickly in it. There is in it some strange expanding ability that causes every era to abut each other in front of your eyes. The old traditions of former times which have sunk from the city through the town and down to the small town endure. The ways of the present day also come. Despite their late arrival, they come in their turn as the smart clothes of the vain man come to a kinsman of low status. The years loiter in a small town because, even though the City Life keeps the gate open, all the stubborn inertia of old country life is lying against the back door.

Sooner or later there would come to our town that which neither the city nor the big town wanted any more. Especially people. *Objects* would not be shunned as quickly. The city has a high opinion of old tables and old chairs and old books, perhaps because they aid a person to ignore the shortness of life. But the city soon tires of old people or of old entertainment. We know that very well in our town. The eleven o'clock train and the six o'clock train slowly added to the number of the rejected amongst us. A company of players occasionally came to perform in the public hall. The members were always elderly, and their inspiration had come to an end. The plays were old-fashioned and crude. They all had the appearance of excommunicated people who came together outside a city that did not want them and who agreed to sink together to a lower stage, where the weak talents shone more brilliantly, by prolonging the illusion of their abilities and the joy of life. The companies all announced that they would be staying 'for a week only'. Even so, they stayed for a month. Where could they go? Beyond the town there lay the countryside between its quiet hills, entertaining itself drowsily with its own natural talents. It took a month for them to hear of another place that would receive them, not to mention to scrape together enough to pay their debts before setting off.

Individuals came also with the dust of the road on their shoes – Punch and Judy men, masters of magic and illusion, fire eaters, one-man bands – all the unwanted old-fashioned toys of the big towns. And one day there came a group of itinerant players and with them a mobile playhouse of wood and canvas.

These people were of a different quality to all the others. I do not know from where they came to our town. Not from a city and not from a large city for sure, because such places had not seen people like this in a generation. Cities were fewer and smaller at that time. It was advertised

that they would stay with us for over a month, but they knew that they had enough material to sustain them for a year. To start with, there was a different play every night, 'preceded by a hilarious farce' as their posters stated. Even when the month stretched into months there were never fewer than three different plays every week. It is true that they performed a certain amount of rubbish to begin with. Perhaps they were trying to compete with the companies that came to the public hall. But even though they started with bombast and make-believe they came at last to fun and heartbreak, by wandering the long road from *East Lynne* and *Uncle Tom's Cabin* to the Forest of Arden and to that frightful field near Dover.⁴

It was a hard road for them. With time it was seen that our small town could not sustain a playhouse for ever. The tradition of the town was against this also. We would entertain ourselves, while being thankful at the same time for the occasional assistance. So the players began to fall step by step through the different grades of lodgings that existed in the town; from the velvet parlours of the respected houses down to the bareness of the house of 'Jones the clean beds'. This was a pilgrimage all too familiar to the newcomers. The fine city accents that had been boasting in the presence of those who frequented the Oxford Arms were to be heard, before the end, begging for a drink in the Bridge Inn. So many an old pilgrim dragged himself towards Jones's house! I can still see the pensive faces of some of them lined up before my mind's eye like the portraits of ministers in a gallery. But the players are a group apart; it is easier to hear their voices and their laughter than to see them.

I came to know some of them quite well. We had a draper's shop at home, and this was often of service to the wardrobe man in the playhouse. Even in our town fashions changed sooner or later, and there would always be a quantity of the old stock at hand waiting for the church fair and other similar events. An occasional play received a small part of its splendour from this material. I saw Lady Macbeth listening to that frightful knocking on the castle door, wearing something unsellable from the shop. And I saw, from time to time, a piece of white cardboard (most often from a blouse box) gleaming beyond the stage lights as a substitute for the shirt front of a gentleman in his dinner suit.

Before long some of the players penetrated from the shop into the house because my sister supposed that she could learn some fancy dancing from them. From that moment the house became like a theatre. There was high kicking in the kitchen and, amidst the whirling of skirts with leaded hem, there were slow descents to the floor of our parlour.

But we learned more than dancing from them. They revealed an inexplicably brave heart and an unconquerable joy, along with stomachs

as empty as their pockets. Nothing came unwelcome to them, neither experience nor food. Well, perhaps that is an exaggeration, because as their season in the town progressed they became poorer and poorer. Their playhouse became so ragged that it was good for nothing. The roof became like a sieve for collecting rain and pouring it on the few heads beneath. The tent stood in a field beside an old barn in which it is said that Sarah Siddons, as a child, acted for the very first time. One sat in the tent on plank benches that rose like steps towards the rear. Tuppence was charged for entry to the gallery, that is the steps, and that was the most comfortable place of all. There you could place your feet between people who sat on the lower bench in front of you. Your feet would be dry and your legs warm. Down on the stalls⁵ you would be rooting up the mud like a pig. Some heat was provided to the place by fire braziers placed here and there in the aisles between the benches. The invisible smoke from the burning coke almost chokes me in remembering it. Last, the stage was lit by carbide gas.

More than the stage was lit by the gas-producing machine. Light was thrown on many a mishap and annoyance by its irregular working. As the months progressed it became a custom for a man to grope towards his seat by the weak light of the braziers alone. At the starting time of the ‘hilarious farce’ the director would come to the stage with a lit candle in his hand. ‘Ladies and gentlemen,’ said he, ‘I am truly sorry to have to inform you that a totally unexpected misfortune has befallen the lighting equipment. But our skilled engineer is working diligently, and let us hope that the dawn will break before long. In the meantime (with your permission) I will recite these immortal lines . . .’ We were pleased with this addition to the programme. There would be perfect mutual understanding. The reciter knew that everyone understood that the ‘skilled engineer’ had just collected enough money at the door for him to run to Meredith’s shop to fetch carbide.

The players could not perform any tragedy that stabbed you as sharply as their own troubled vicissitudes. Was I not able to ponder the source of Lady Macbeth’s dress at a moment of horror in the play? There was something out of place as they tried to convey anxiety and sadness and terror. You felt that they were acting. Perhaps they were too acquainted with sorrow and they could not break down the perpetual self-restraint that protected them every day. It is asking for a very blessed and contented man to portray all the agonies of creations such as Lear or Othello. Only that sort of man can be completely in love with all the perils of the imagination. But there was not such a man nor woman nor child in the company. They were Falstaff’s children all. On the stage and on the ground they carried on seemingly joyously by romancing and pretending and denying and starving – and laughing at it all.

Falstaff is one of the greatest – and one of the saddest – of the children of imagination in the world. But the world does not want him in the flesh. Because he is the enemy of the City Life. As I suggested, that went through the town as abruptly as the east wind blew past, rattling the signs of the inns and lifting rubbish from the gutter and chasing it out of the town. Pity the players trapped at the bottom of the sieve⁶ on Jones's lice-ridden mattresses. Their spirit had been sucked out and a surfeit was had of them. They were thrown out of the back door like tea dregs.

There was then nothing for it but to go in a group to a row of unoccupied cottages on the edge of the town that was called the College. There was no more appropriate place for them to shiver together. To one side of them there was a visible piece of the fifteenth century where Hergest Court stood amidst its orchard. To the other was a building from the time of Elizabeth, the old grammar school. And as it happens, there was a connection a long time ago between their cottages and both of them. Therefore the shadow of the dead ages, to which their talents belonged, covered their last lodging. Through instinct or not, they did everything according to pattern.

Mr Jones's beds were not long without tenants. Two foreigners went unnoticed to their historic sheets one night. But their furniture received considerable attention from everyone. The station wagons carried a number of long boxes in the shape of coffins up the street and placed them by the door of the Oddfellows' Hall. The Oddfellows was a fairly dead order in our midst at that time. It had thrived and languished along with the foundry and the nail factory and the tannery. Few members now processed with their banners and their coloured sashes to the church on the Festival Day, and their hall was empty and at the service of the natural needs of our little town.

In every box there was a murderer, or rather a wax replica of him. Charles Peace, Stinie Morrison, Dr Crippin, William Carder and all the rest – they were taken in a cheerless procession up the stairs and placed in a watchful row against the wall in the back of the hall. At the far end of the hall a small stage like a doll's house was erected, and in front of it was placed the vanished Oddfellows' chairs. Then a poster was nailed to the door: 'Wax images and Puppets. Admission one penny, seats thruppence.'

Puppets are in vogue again these days, but at the time that word connoted some old entertainment that was spoken of by your grandmother. It was such an old entertainment that it was completely new again, and it received a warm welcome by the townspeople. According to the traditional custom the two men who worked the puppets stayed longer than the appointed time. But that was the first time ever that anyone prospered and

grew fat by doing so, rising from the poverty of Jones's house up to the comfortable parlour of a respectable landlady. Every night as the players came to the town and walked down to their wet playhouse in the field, there would be a long queue of people waiting by the door of the Oddfellows' Hall. Our town was a rainy town. Let that be an excuse for our consorting with Charles Peace and his associates in their warm room and submitting to the enchantment of 'the idols of puppetry', as the Reverend Joseph Jenkins from Wrexham once said.

That reverend gentleman has nothing to do with this story. It is over a century and a half since he thundered against 'diverting oneself in sin, and laughing at divinity', which he perceived in these performances. But I must support his famous sermon with one weak amen from afar. Because to me also there is something wicked in the tricks of these small wooden men, but it is something diabolical that the preacher did not notice. It is possible that I have seen some of the plays that attracted his flock, since some of them were traditional, such as the History of Faustus and the adventures of Tim Bobbin, and the old cruel and lascivious play that Punch and Judy is based on. The Punch Play is a play for children, it is said, and yet is not the material of the story odd? A man beating a woman and killing her. Throwing the child into a ditch and killing it. Afterwards escaping from the gallows and hanging the policeman in his stead. A man who has a special face that is an old symbol for the lust of the flesh.

I did not know much about that at the time, but I felt that there was something amiss implicit in the whole thing. Down in the field the plays would create joy in you and entertain you. You could say about the most overwhelming tragedy that it was 'good'. But here, in the presence of the little wooden idols, there was only agitation. There was no intense feeling or real fun. There was something almost distasteful in these puppets as they strutted though the most ridiculous farce. Laughter chirped from their stubborn lifelessness with a sound as spiteful as a man's words from the beak of a parrot. It was inhuman. It was a hurtful lie in the image of a person. Laughter was mocked here. A wire was pulled and a wooden arm was raised to throw ridicule on man.

But if the comedies were tasteless, the tragedies were almost unbearable. Disaster was completely disastrous. And an evil man was a lump of unmitigated evil. Here was displayed to perfection the cruelty and evil and misfortune that the players in their tent could never portray even though they continually experienced them. It might be that only the inanimate little puppets could sustain unmitigated, malicious evil. They had not in them the breath which warms every clay and softens every wickedness. Their strength was in the Frankenstein-like gait and in the

malignant immobility of the mask. Were not those melodramas over there in the field funny? But here would be Sweeny Todd congealing the marrow in your bones, whispering longingly: 'O that the round world would be one smooth white neck – and *I* could slit it!'

Perhaps the wax images in the back of the room had something to do with the atmosphere. There were some twenty of them lined up there, each filling a space about the size of a man. But, they being motionless, the air around them was stagnant. There was always a rigid silence behind you, a silence that was stealing space and filling it. Your mind would be conscious of it and waiting, exactly as in the darkness your body is instinctively aware of a physical obstacle in your path and you stand still. Forty unblinking eyes would stare at you and at the pitiless play on the little stage. I wonder whether the showmen sympathised with them as they animated the dolls and they attempted to please the dead masters of the craft. I wonder if they were exerting themselves to win a ray of acknowledgement from the knowing hard eyes in front of them: 'Was it like this that you placed her under the floor, Dr Crippin? . . . Was it thus that the poison is mixed, Mr Seddon?'

Did they know that the murderers were still killing in their pale, bloodless eternity? Because those phantoms were slowly smothering the players with the weight of penniless days. We were all helping. They received from me sufficient pennies to place on the closed eyes of all the players. That is how pleasant hours of fun and laughter and the eternal magic of their unforgettable lines were repaid. A shame that youth and understanding cannot come together with each other. At that time I was sorry that people were old and unable to earn their keep in a wet tent. I would often meet with one or two of them at the supper table. No doubt that they happened to call in the house on their way back from the field. There would be some message about the empty boxes or unwanted clothes for the playhouse. My mother was the kindest woman in the world. She would laugh with them and help them and, after closing the door behind them, she would sit in a kind of dazed concern. She was for a season like a little wren with cuckoos in the nest. And then like cuckoos they disappeared. To where I do not know, nor how, nor when. They freed themselves quietly from the town:

Fel y niwl o afael nant Y dison ymadawsant	Like the mist from the grip of the stream Silently they left.
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They left their playhouse for the wind and the rain to end their performance. That is how we knew that they had left. One night it was

not lit up. The firelight did not stream out through the dark eyes of the door. The place lay cold and silent and empty like a skull in the mud. No one came on to apologise for the unexpected accident and to declaim immortal lines. The shreds of canvas above shook in the rain-swept wind like wordless tongues

NOTES

¹ The Welsh title is ‘Chwaryddion Crwydrol’. The first word is comparatively straightforward: ‘players’. But *crwydrol* means ‘wandering, vagrant, roving, nomadic, migratory’ [*Geiriadur Prifysgol Cymru – University of Wales Dictionary* – (the multivolume Welsh equivalent of the OED)] or ‘wandering, straying, strolling, roaming, nomadic’ [Spurrell’s *Welsh-English Dictionary*, which the author, having worked for Spurrell, used as his standard reference]. On page 163 of *Radnorshire*, published by the Radnorshire Society in 1973, WH Howse states ‘The strolling bands of actors who formerly toured the country usually called themselves Companies of Comedians. The word “comedian” here had no connection with the “comedian” of modern times, but was intended to denote people who acted in comedies. In point of fact, they acted both in comedy and tragedy.’ Again, in *Kington – Herefordshire – Memorials of an Old Town* (which was published in 1953, presumably by Howse himself, based on articles written by him for the Kington Times under the title of ‘Old-Time Kington’) pages 29–30 contain three paragraphs under the heading ‘Strolling Players’. So there might be authority for translating the title of this essay as ‘Strolling Players’. Except it is not known whether ‘strolling players’ was the term used by the community of the time or whether it was Howse’s term. Also ‘stroll’ and ‘strolling’ have their own Welsh words (*tro*, *rhodio*). So Payne clearly had something else in mind. ‘Itinerant’ was chosen because it seemed to convey the way of life of the players, but no suitable English title can convey the suggested alliteration, associative richness and mellifluousness of ‘Chwaryddion Crwydrol’.

² *Ysbryd Dinesig*, literally ‘Urban Spirit’.

³ The thoughts expressed are contained within two sentences in the original and the meaning is difficult to convey with elegance in English without subdividing the sentences. A literal translation would be: ‘Many people will turn their backs on such a place as soon as they are able to, and leave for the environment which they had tasted as much of it as had trickled into the town or had stayed in it. Because isn’t the place wonderful that can suggest to its residents the rich variety of worlds and of life?’

⁴ Shakespeare’s *King Lear*.

⁵ ‘*I lawr yn y seddau chwech . . .*’ *Tŷ chwech* or *lle chwech* is an euphemism, akin to ‘loo’ in English. ‘Stalls’ was selected because of its association with both toilets and theatres.

⁶ *Rhidyll* means ‘sieve’. The image in the author’s mind seems to be of dregs being caught by a tea strainer or sieve before, in the next sentence, being emptied out of the back door.

THE RADNORSHIRE WILDLIFE TRUST

Julian Jones

During the second half of the twentieth century, mixed farming in Radnorshire was replaced by a ‘sheepscape’ as agriculture changed, much increasing the numbers of sheep in areas which, like much of Radnorshire, were described by the European Union as disadvantaged or severely disadvantaged. Unlike many other rural Welsh counties, Radnorshire escaped heavy afforestation with conifers but, where every farm once had a field of oats, many fields with rough grassland for cattle, a network of hedges and numerous farm ponds, successive UK and European policies gave farmers an incentive to increase the number of sheep they kept and ignored farmers who continued to farm in a traditional manner.

Semi-natural grasslands and marshy grasslands (*rhos* pasture) declined dramatically after 1950. A survey of grasslands carried out by the Hereford and Radnor Nature Trust (1982–83) found over 500 grassland sites of importance for nature conservation. A number of these became Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) in the decade that followed. By the time the Countryside Council for Wales (CCW) conducted a habitat survey of the county (1991–93), only 125 such sites remained intact.¹ Radnorshire Wildlife Trust surveyed a proportion of these 125 sites (2003–05) and found that 38% had been damaged or destroyed since 1993.²

The whole of Radnorshire became an Environmentally Sensitive Area (ESA) in the 1980s. The Wildlife Trust lobbied tirelessly for this. The biodiversity benefits of the ESA designation (as of the agri-environment scheme, Tir Gofal, that succeeded it) have been questioned. However, the recognition that much of Radnorshire retains its semi-natural character, although damaged, has been worthwhile. According to a recent survey,³ 8764 hectares of Radnorshire (or 7.1%) is protected as a SSSI. Of this a significant proportion is upland habitat dominated by heather moorland.

It may seem strange to form a Trust from counties in two different countries, but in 1997 Liz Fleming-Williams wrote: ‘There had been many links historically between naturalists in Hereford and Radnor (particularly ornithologists). Sir Michael Venables-Llewelyn from Llysdinam at Newbridge-on-Wye was key in linking the two counties’. Yet this Trust formed in December 1962 was probably destined to have only a limited lifespan. This may have been due to its straddling two countries or to its being within a sparsely populated area with limited financial resources, though rich in wildlife. Couple that with the fiercely independent spirit that prevails in the county and a split would have become inevitable at some stage.

Even though Radnorshire Wildlife Trust existed only as a sub-committee of the Hereford and Radnor Nature Trust, the 1970s and 80s were a very busy time for nature conservation in the county. When Dr Fred Slater arrived in 1974 to take up his position as Director of Cardiff University's field centre at Newbridge-on-Wye, Denys Smith was Chairman of the Radnorshire sub-committee and had a particular interest in plants. Denys was Headmaster of Whitton Primary School near Presteigne and convened two meetings a year with the Group Secretary, Ivor Hughes.

In 1975, Dr Slater set up an autumn lecture programme and along with Ray Woods and Ian Soane, both local Nature Conservancy Council (NCC) staff, bore the brunt of the talks. Liz Fleming-Williams recalls that one year Fred delivered fifty energy-sapping talks across Radnorshire! Fred took over from Denys Smith as Group Chairman in 1978. The programme of talks continued, as did a community wildlife project to save the toads breeding at Llandrindod lake. This came about following representations from a local resident, Doug Barnes, who was concerned about the fate of the toads crossing the road to the lake. As a result, the first 'toad patrol' was set up as part of a study carried out by Dr Paul Gittins and Andrew Parker into the dynamics of the population at the lake. It was estimated that more toads bred at Llandrindod lake than in the whole of Cambridgeshire. Fred Slater conducted all the publicity, dealing with sixteen radio interviews and three TV crews in one week and the film being seen as far away as New Zealand. Following his death in 1981, Doug Barnes's love for the lake was commemorated by an annual lecture in his memory. Speakers through the years have included Welsh personalities like Iolo Williams and Dee Doody, Radnorshire experts like Tony Cross and Bob Dennison, Tony Soper, one-time children's wildlife icon, and Professor David Bellamy.

Using government funds through the Manpower Services Agency and Job Creation Programme, a full-time, manned office was set up for the Radnor section of the HRNT. Perhaps a permanent split was inevitable from this time onwards. Numbers varied from year to year, but there were up to five people working in the offices, which ranged from a basement room in Powys County Council to a unit on a Llandrindod industrial estate. There was a project manager with an assistant, plus field workers who surveyed woodland, peatland, meadows and pastures; worked with schools; created educational resources and went all over the county giving talks and recruiting new members. Ray Woods describes this era as rather a 'golden age'. The collaboration between the field centre, NCC and the Nature Trust produced a stream of high-quality future ecologists: Roger and Rosie Key (Roger is now Senior Entomologist with Natural England),

the late Pat Wisniewski and Louise Paull (Pat was head of the Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust at Martin Mere), Steve Chambers and Alan Orange (today two of the UK's leading lichenologists) and Richard Collingridge. Jon Messenger (now of Vincent Wildlife Trust) and Pete Jennings (Senior Ranger at Elan Valley Trust) set up bat and bird groups respectively. Dave Drewett carried out many of the grassland surveys and today is Area Ecologist for CCW. As an aside, Ray Woods, Pat Wisniewski and Richard Collingridge were the finalists on BBC Radio 4's Natural History Quiz during its last series.

From 1974 to 1986, when Fred Slater stood down as Chairman, the Trust gained about eight nature reserves, including a small wood near Penybont. Initially the wood was to be left to it as part of a considerable estate of small farms, but the Trust was ultimately left just this tiny wood. Most of the nature reserves acquired by the Trust at this time were quite small and difficult to manage. Within a few years this would change radically.

The last joint newsletter of the HRNT and the first couple of those of the RWT, newly formed on 10 April 1987, documented the change from a cross-border enterprise to the smallest Welsh trust. The Chairman during this period was Dr Gordon Parker. In a letter of January 2007, he recalled his memories of the changeover:

When a separate trust (for Radnorshire) was at the feasibility stage, I discussed the idea with Dr Franklin Perring. He had recently been involved in the formation of a trust in Rutland, which at the time was the smallest county in the UK. He was very enthusiastic. I also discussed the matter on a number of occasions with Eric Bartlett, who was the secretary of the Brecknock Trust. I remember he rather sat on the fence! I also had many telephone conversations with the then chairman of the Hereford and Radnor Nature Trust; this was not very easy. When it was decided that we should go ahead with the formation of the Radnorshire Wildlife Trust, I remember we had no money. I had an interview with NCC in Bangor, but this produced nothing. However, Dr Elizabeth (Libby) Andrews arranged a meeting for me with the Hon. Vincent Weir; he agreed to provide a grant to get us started.

Gordon Parker became the first Chairman with Liz Fleming-Williams as Vice-Chairman and the Trust was officially launched at the Royal Welsh Agricultural Show on 20 July 1987.

No sooner had the RWT been formed than a whole valley came up for sale north of Rhayader. The Trust's purchase of the 383 acre Gilfach Farm started with a bid of £90,000, mainly provided by the National Heritage

Memorial Fund, and was completed, after a very worrying and uncertain time, with an agreed figure of £170,000. Few wildlife trusts had purchased or managed farms before, let alone one with a derelict Welsh longhouse dating back to the fourteenth century. The struggle earned a place on page two of the *Guardian*⁴ and the *Mid Wales Journal* described the Trust's anguish at losing out in a sealed-bid auction held in Rhayader in January 1988, as a mystery bidder 'sped off in an estate car' following the auction.⁵ RWT's £170,000 bid came in second place.

However, after a week or so the successful bidder who had outbid RWT with an offer of £176,000 decided they did not want Gilfach after all and so the long saga of the farm's restoration began. Such was the derelict state of the farmhouse that a huge amount of the Trust's energy went into this project initially. The whole reserve is now a SSSI and a Special Protection Area (SPA) and part of it a Special Area of Conservation (SAC), and it is a flagship of the RWT and the Welsh wildlife trusts and also one of the premier wildlife sites in the UK.⁶

Gordon Parker again recounts that one of his proudest moments as Trust Chairman was when Prince Charles visited Gilfach during the restoration of the house. Clearly the place made a big impression on him. At one point the Prince turned to Gordon and said that he liked the fact that it was not a wet farm. Gordon looked a little puzzled as, like much of Radnorshire, the farm is not exactly dry. Prince Charles explained that he meant it was nice not to have one's shoes covered in sheep muck.

Despite Gilfach soaking up much of the time and effort of staff and volunteers at RWT, new reserves were acquired between 1987 and 1997. A full-time warden, Tim Thompson, was appointed at Gilfach, using a five-year grant from Environment Wales, and a Conservation and Administration Officer to handle other matters. The first Conservation Officer, Dave Hargreaves, left the Trust in 1997, moving to Yorkshire Wildlife Trust, from which he frequently returns to Radnorshire to visit his many friends and reminisce about the thirteen years or so he worked for the Trust. Chris Thain replaced Dave in 1997 and, working closely together, he, the Environment Officer Alison Davies and the Chairman Nick Myhill managed a number of exciting projects.

Notable in this period was a two-year Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) biological evaluation project (1997–99), which involved a biological audit of ten of the Trust's reserves, including Gilfach Farm. Soils and geology, invertebrates, birds, lichens, bryophytes and flora were all surveyed in detail. This allowed the Trust to embark with great confidence on a reserves-enhancement, capital works project also funded by the HLF.

In 2000, Chris Thain left for Brownsea Island Nature reserve and was

replaced by myself as Conservation Officer. I had worked in Radnorshire in 1998–99 as Powys Wildlife Sites Officer, and returned to work in a much wider role. Some quipped that having red hair must be a requirement, as both Dave Hargreaves and Chris Thain also had auburn colouring.

RWT has borrowed ideas from a number of other wildlife trusts in the UK. Since 2000 we have developed a Private Nature Reserves scheme (originally developed by Somerset Wildlife Trust), and for the past five years have run a primary schools wildlife quiz (originally developed by Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust), in which up to eighteen schools have taken part.

As a small trust with fewer than ten full-time staff, in a county of only 25,000 people, managing around 6,000 acres, it can be a hand-to-mouth existence. Thanks to a fantastic volunteer force, the envy of many bigger trusts, which helps with reserves management, shop and sales work, educational activities, ecological surveys and a proliferation of administrative tasks, the Trust has not only survived but thrived.

The HLF Reserves Enhancement project was completed in 2004, having been led for the most part by James Blair and completed by Jonathan Stone. Through their leadership the weekly volunteer groups achieved an astonishing amount of work. James's Christmas quizzes became legendary among volunteers, with teasers like 'How many four-inch nails were used by RWT work parties in 2003?'

The national focus of the wildlife trusts has gone towards landscape-scale restoration as a means of alleviating current and future problems posed by climate change, and reversing habitat fragmentation. Recent RWT acquisitions have linked or extended existing reserves as at Bailey Einon at Cefnllys (2001), Cwm Byddog near Clyro (2002), Cefn Cenarth woodlands at Pant-y-dwr (2004) and land near Tylcau Hill, Llanbister, which was purchased in 2008. The Trust's strategy over the next five years will continue in the same way, linking with large-area projects.

After twenty-four years, Radnorshire Wildlife Trust is still the most recognisable force for nature conservation in the county. The very embodiment of nature conservation at work, the staff and the many volunteers are helping to secure the county's natural heritage.

Acknowledgements

I am indebted to Gordon Parker, Liz Fleming-Williams and Fred Slater for their thoughts and words in pulling this together, and to RG Woods's *Flora of Radnorshire* (National Museum of Wales, Cardiff, 1993). Other quotations come from private correspondence.

NOTES

¹ CCW, *A Habitat Survey of Radnor* (Natural Science Report 96/4/1, 1996).

² RWT, *The Status of Semi-natural Grassland in Radnorshire* (Internal Report, 2006).

³ BBC Publications, *Wildlife* (February 2007).

⁴ *Guardian*, (2 November 1987).

⁵ *Mid Wales Journal*, (22 January 1988).

⁶ *Independent*, (24 November 2006).

HIDDEN HISTORIES

Daphne Turner

Peter Wakelin and Ralph A Griffiths (eds.), *Hidden Histories: Discovering the Heritage of Wales*, RCAHMW, 2008, 328 pp.

Hidden Histories: Discovering the Heritage of Wales is a centenary publication by the Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Wales. It is based on images gathered by the Commission: revealingly, there are two title pages, one showing a 1915 black and white photograph of a locomotive at a colliery and the other a beautiful modern photograph of Barmouth and the Mawddach estuary with receding lines of hills behind them. Each site and building discussed is cross-referenced to the Commission's on-line database, and a Welsh language version is also available. It looks like a coffee-table book, large, glossy, dependent on photographs, but is much more substantial than that.

The introduction is a short history of the Commission, which was founded a year after the National Library and the National Museum of Wales, making it part of the renaissance of Wales's separate cultural identity. It pays tribute to the scholars who worked with such dedication for it. Then the book is structured in ten sections, covering ten historical periods: pre-history to the future. Each section has an overview introductory essay and then a series of double-page spreads: left, a photograph of a selected monument; right, a brief article on its importance and relationship to other monuments. The result is a book that can be read (skipping the individual monuments) as a succinct history of Wales, or dipped into for the photographs or for information about a particular place of interest.

On Maesyronnen Chapel, Richard Suggett's article reads '... the Royal Commission's study of Radnorshire houses showed that it was converted from a longhouse of medieval origin'. TJ Hughes (*Wales's Best One Hundred Churches*) writes 'It started life as a barn long and low and earth-brown ...'. The tone of the book is factual and informative, in contrast with Hughes's more imaginative approach. Facts and information are important, and enable writers like Hughes. The book is full of interest about history and buildings. I was surprised to learn that Wales in 1851 'had become the first country to count more people employed in industry than in agriculture'. Nor had I known that round corbelled stone buildings were to be found in Wales, geographically limited to the south and 'noted as a curiosity by late eighteenth-century travellers', but apparently farmers built these extraordinary structures to 'provide a palatial home for one of

the mainstays of the cottage and farm economy, the humble pig'. One re-thinks the obvious. How short the history of archaeology is and how rapidly it has developed in our lifetimes. The Commission's simple initial brief to list the monuments of Wales faced the complications of change to both monuments and environment, and they began to use new archaeological techniques: digging; undersea archaeology; aerial photography, which revolutionised knowledge of lost pre-historic and Roman settlements. How long are the time-spans of human history (the first section begins 225,000 years ago) and of geological change (a burial of 29,000 years ago was found in a sea cave that had once been inland).

The poetry of the book is in the photographs. Those magnificent aerial photographs quite literally make one see the landscape from a different angle. There is a view of the whole of Bardsey island; wonderful stretches of sea and coast and hills; hills seen from above, not below; early lost settlements showing as lines and arcs of green on yellowed fields which farmers have ploughed and grown crops on for centuries. These are things one would never have seen with one's feet on the ground. Early black and white photographs recall lost ways of life: a farmhouse kitchen; a workman splitting slates; Amlwych harbour in the nineteenth century; staff and orphans outside Albro Castle workhouse.

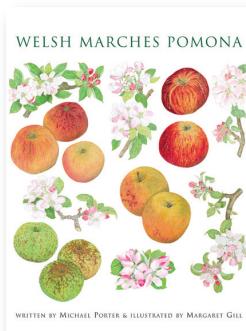
There are a few niggles. There is no entry 'Radnorshire' in the index. One has to read the book to discover that there were Neolithic monuments and a Roman camp in the Walton basin; that Radnor town 'shrank during the Black Death'; that Presteigne has no medieval buildings because of a 'catastrophic fire' in 1681; that Monaughty was one of a group of sixteenth-century open-hall houses rebuilt with wings and upper floors. Also, if a photograph covers a large area and shows a lot of detail, it is often difficult to recognise in the picture what the text tells one is there. Though the Industrial Revolution and the later collapse of heavy industry was immensely important to Wales, the prominence given to these in the second half of the book shifts the emphasis away from rural areas and makes it less appealing. Perhaps after all it was the book's coffee-table beauty that I most enjoyed.

WELSH APPLES

Frances Jones Davies

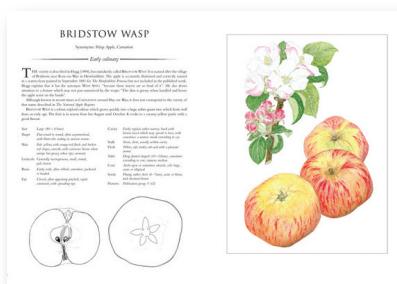
Michael Porter and Margaret Gill,
Welsh Marches Pomona,
Marcher Apples Network, 2010,
ISBN 978-0-9555621-3-6, 95 pp., £25.

Fair the gift to Merlin given,
Apple-trees seven score and seven;
Equal all in age and size;
On a green hill-slope, that lies
Basking in the southern sun,
Where bright waters murmuring run . . .

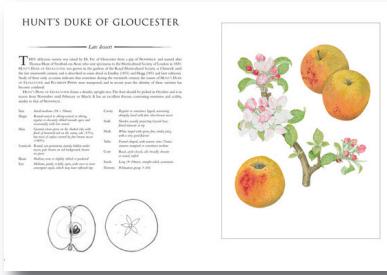


From *The Misfortune of Elphin* by Thomas Love Peacock

102 down; 45 to go. My husband is a man of vision and very good at springing things on me; once an idea has firmly taken hold of him diverting him is like attempting to stop the juggernaut. Roughly fourteen years ago he told me he was going to start a magazine. I was rather taken aback and, probably luckily, didn't realise quite how much it would come to dominate our lives. Several years ago he came back from a visit to Birmingham which coincided with the St. Patrick's Day Parade, and the following St David's Day the first National St David's Day Parade took place in Cardiff. About three years ago, he read me the poem above inspired by the Black Book of Carmarthen. He took me outside and pointed to the stream and sloping hillside from which can clearly be seen the hill where Merlin was supposed to have been born. Several months went by; a small windfall arrived, and sometime after that there was a frightening delivery of small trees in little black pots.



The trees are all Welsh varieties: a blend of dessert, cookers and cider apples, three of each. They will flower and fruit at different times. We are not putting all our eggs in one basket. This way any gales howling their way up the valley will hopefully not be timed to strip them all of their blossom before the fruit sets.



and a taste is given of the diversity in colour, marking, shape and texture by the lovely watercolour examples of several apples and their blossom on the creamy, matt white cover.

Then, a hasty leaf through to read up greedily on any I might recognise. How many Welsh varieties are there? We seem to have barely made a dent so far. Here is an entire book; only four of ours are present and most I have never heard of. However, I gather that the commercial orchards of old might have had more than two hundred varieties of trees. Of the trees we have so far most were chosen by Paul Davis of Dolau-Hirion, Capel Isaac, who grafted and got them ready for us. We had only specified a couple of varieties, Bardsey being one.

Each variety has a double page spread: beneath the name appear synonyms and usage, and a page of illustrative watercolour on the right depicts apple and blossom. To my untrained eye the various blossoms and leaves all seem very similar, but on inspection of course there are differences in nuance of pink, colour of stamen, outline. The leaves are all depicted at the back in minute detail, quarter life-size with magnified edge. The names themselves are often curious: Ten Commandments, Foxwhelp, Pig yr Wydd; many are named for people and places.

The unusually inclement weather last year (and again this!) had me leafing through Francis Kilvert for comparisons, so it was with interest that I noted two Radnorshire varieties that had come to his attention, Landore and Sam's Crab. On 26 February 1872, he wrote in his diary that during a visit to the local miller he had been given 'three Landore apples, an old fashioned keeping apple, very good'. The variety is still highly regarded by many country people, because trees produce good crops under poor conditions for apple cultivation. Young trees grow vigorously but are slow to start bearing fruit. Also, on 21 September 1870, Kilvert noted that when he visited John Morgan, an old soldier, veteran of the Peninsular Wars, he was given 'some Sam's Crab and Quinins'. Sadly

My initial dismay and resignation have been replaced by tendrils of enthusiasm. We are now drawn with interest to anything to do with apples, so it was a cause of great delight when *Welsh Marches Pomona* by Michael Porter and illustrated by Margaret Gill arrived for review. Firstly, I had to enjoy the feel of it. It is tremendously satisfying to hold,

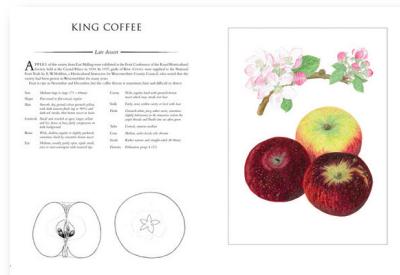
neither variety is represented in our orchard, although the former sounds a ‘must have’.

On the left page are a brief history and snippets of information: where it is most commonly found, recommendation for use and the odd quotation. I have become fond of Chatley Kernel on the strength of Edward Bunyard’s rather damning description, ‘Hardly worthy of cultivation’; in short, a good keeper with not much else to recommend it! I like to be told, as with King’s Acre Bountiful, that it is ‘in season from September to November and [is] delicious as a sharp puree or roasted to make succulent baked apples’, but not all are accompanied by such helpful hints. There follows a detailed botanical description and a drawing of the cross section depicting the shape and lie of the core and pips within.

The foreword and introduction are full of interest too: the laws of Hywel Dda equated the value of a fruiting sweet apple tree to that of a cow. One hundred years ago almost everybody had an apple tree, and if you had some land you probably had a range of fruit trees, but during the twentieth century 95% of orchards were lost. Farmers were actually paid incentives to grub them up. So much is lost to us, not just information and knowledge, and sadly there are no longer roving cider mills. As I look out of the window at a hillside of apple trees, how much easier things would be if I knew that we could expect a visit from one of them.

Recently, there has been an upsurge in orchard groups and planting. There are more reasons than just the fruit for planting these trees: apparently nightingales love to nest in them and, when I went to see an apple display at the Royal Welsh, I was told that apple trees are particularly good at purifying the air.

This book, produced by the Marcher Apple Network (MAN), is a labour of love and enthusiasm, a thing of beauty as well as instruction. It will bring pleasure to any apple enthusiast and is full of practical advice and pointers to a wider knowledge on this subject.



WELSH ART AND ARCHITECTURE

Daphne Turner

TJ Hughes, *Wales's Best One Hundred Churches*, Seren, 2006, 302 pp., £12.99.

Richard Wheeler, *The Medieval Church Screens of the Southern Marches*, Logaston Press, 2006, 310 pp., £17.50.

Kathryn Davies, *Artisan Art: vernacular wall paintings in the Welsh Marches, 1550–1650*, Logaston Press, 2008, 230 pp., £17.50.

I write about these books as someone without specialist knowledge of church or domestic architecture who has grown to know and love a part of Radnorshire over many decades as a visitor. For me, they are guide books to what I do not know.

They set me thinking that a good guide book entices one to visit in the first place, and provides information which ensures that when one gets there one notices things one might otherwise overlook. If anything could create a desire to visit Welsh churches (and chapels too, of which he includes a number) it is TJ Hughes's passionate, poetic and beautifully illustrated book, *Wales's Best One Hundred Churches*, concerned above all to communicate how the churches he writes about 'grab at the heart'.

His focus is on Welshness. In his introduction he has two main themes. One is the continuity between places in which pagans recognised numinous power and the Christian llans (which he translates as 'sacred space'), using myths about the saints, magic and holy wells to evoke the connection between them. To him, a church is only the 'latest marker' of a sacred site. This is his reason for the frequent remoteness of Welsh churches as opposed to their Anglo-Norman counterparts. Indeed, he points out that three Welsh cathedrals, in total contrast to those in England and Europe, 'remain resolutely' in villages, and that Llandaff is in a city 'only by accident', having been swallowed up as Cardiff spread. His constant theme is that Welsh churches are 'secret treasures', 'lost in the landscape'.

Welshness in the siting of churches is one theme. His second is the contrast between Anglo-Norman and Welsh churches in their architecture and use of internal space. To him, Anglo-Norman churches are urban, dedicated to the Virgin or international saints, and divided into distinct areas by aisles, transepts, chancel and chancel arch, which, in a typically illuminating phrase, 'direct the gaze forward rather than around'.

Of course he includes in the book churches from the Anglo-Norman tradition. All four cathedrals are there and so are other churches, including Usk, Wrexham, Gresford and St Mary's Abergavenny. But they demand to be discussed as architecture, which to Hughes 'misses something at the heart' of Welsh churches: their preference for a simple, communal space from which the outside world is not excluded. To him, the 'archetypal church of Wales is the isolated, simple, evocative walls-with-roof, in a landscape often spiritually charged'.

He believes that 'God and community, in the natural world of Creation, were the three defining elements of Welsh religious life', and that the internal space of Welsh churches has the effect of keeping the congregation aware of each other. For instance, he writes in some detail about Maesyronnen Chapel, at the centre of which 'two communal seats face each other across a plank table'. This reminds one of the common root of 'Communion' and 'community', since it places the sacrament 'at the heart of the congregation', where they can look at each other and are not 'railed off at an altar'. Acknowledging the goods of the created world, he points out that at Old Radnor the church and the pub share the same Celtic hill.

Given his emphasis on 'sacred spaces' and 'the natural world of Creation', his book is a guide to hidden Wales as well as to its little-known churches. If one loves walking and landscape, one will want to go to places shown in the magnificent coloured photographs, which, logically, often show the church in its setting: St Govan's half-way up a cliff face; Mwnt on its windy headland; Capel Beilheulog at Gwenddwr, tucked away in trees, with a stream in front of it and its wide view down the valley. Lovers of mid Wales in particular will be tempted by Llananno ('as close to the river edge as any church could be. Water rushes by, churning . . .'); by Cascob (where 'the deeply wooded world of dark age Wales can still be felt'); by the Pales ('hidden up a country lane at the edge of the Radnor forest'). There is even a walker's guide to Patrisio. One would enjoy going through a tunnel of trees, over a stream, across a field full of mountain sheep, up a 'steeply rising thistled field in which, in the far top corner, the church appears'.

He says of Strata Florida that it 'gives up its meaning' to those who have 'known it first in the mind', and in each entry he creates the expectation of an imaginative response. He works poetically, metaphorically. Llanbister stands 'like a ship on a slipway'; its nave is 'an upper deck'. Cascob is a 'medieval bunker of ragged stone', as if the 'minds which built it were under siege'. Disserth is 'the past in an unadulterated dose'. One would want to seek out Patrisio's 'rabbit-eared dragons' with their

'wildly individual tails'. At times one has a pleasure that poetry gives: finding vague feelings made more accessible. I have long found the mountain area between Tregaron and Abergwesyn haunting: the entry on Soar-y-Mynydd verbalises something of its strangeness.

His knowledge of the past also works to build up one's imaginative response. Llanbister's 'fortress of a tower' and 'cave-like defensible interior' are a doorway to an account of turbulent Marcher history and the 'final years of Welsh Maelienydd'. Hughes also has a knack of re-creating the quality of past life from small details: the recess at Tintern Abbey from which the prior could overlook his monks and contemplate his garden; the congregation the preacher at Dissert could see from his pulpit; the unfortunate worshippers at Llanywern, squelching on an earthen floor liable to flooding and used for burials; the ponies in the stables underneath Soar-y-Mynydd, whose heat rose to 'warm the farmers and their dogs in the pews above'.

Wheeler's splendid *The Medieval Church Screens of the Southern Marches* is now sadly out of print. Its strength, in contrast with Hughes's, lies in its full and lucid information. It is specialist and scholarly. Almost half consists of chapters on the development of church architecture, the construction of rood-lofts and screens, the Rood and the representation of Christ, the Reformation, the history of the Marches, an expertise on view in his work on Llananno in the 2007 TRS. I had never even wondered before when altar rails or church choirs began, having taken them for granted in any church I know. I will now look at churches and especially screens with more informed eyes, notice something of how they reveal history through the changes made to them and pay more attention to their beauty and craftsmanship. Other illuminating information includes his account of rood stairs (I had never heard of them), his insistence on how brightly painted and gilded pre-Reformation churches were, and how their teaching through images shifted to a new teaching through the word, as painted texts replaced painted saints. He also supplies a full glossary of technical terms, very useful to the non-specialist.

Wheeler has the scholar's wish to replace simplification with something more subtle and nuanced. He carefully distinguishes the functions and history of the Rood, rood-loft and rood-screen. In his illuminating account of the Reformation he dismisses the common belief that Henry VIII ordered the destruction of rood-screens. He explains that stripping churches was driven largely by Thomas Cromwell rather than by the King, who was a 'traditionalist at heart' but needed the money. The attack on churches began as an attack on Rood figures, because they were venerated images. Because of its physical proximity to the Rood, the rood-loft then

came – illogically – under attack. Wheeler produces a rather comic account of confusion in the 1550s, one bishop demanding that rood-lofts be destroyed, another commanding them to be built. It was not until then that rood-screens began to be damaged, and often it was just a matter of scratching faces off figures; also, people were often unwilling to damage their churches and preserved fixtures and fittings. Wheeler then quotes an order of Elizabeth I, actually ordering screens to be built in churches that did not have them. Similarly, his explanation for the remoteness of many Welsh churches is different from Hughes's, and because there is very little evidence about the early church in Wales he says practically nothing about it before the Norman invasion.

The second half of the book consists of entries on individual churches, organised by counties. Radnorshire is rich: it has seventeen entries. Herefordshire has an astonishing forty-eight. These entries are illustrated by magnificent black-and-white photographs. Most screens are shown as a whole, with resultant views of the inside of the church. Aberedw is startling and dramatic; Llananno tiny and dominated by its huge loft and screen. There are also many close-ups of detail, a lesson to the idle on the beauty one would miss if one did not look carefully. To top it all, there are reproductions of some of James Parker's detailed and historically important nineteenth-century drawings.

The book is therefore satisfactorily complementary to Hughes's. His information about church history, architecture, dating and screens supplement Hughes's imaginative grasp of the churches' environment and quality. Writing about Cascob, Wheeler omits the abracadabra charm; Hughes omits the screen. This is not to imply that Hughes does not supply information. He gives far more general detail about what can be found at and in the churches than Wheeler does. And it is not to imply that Wheeler lacks feeling. His passion for his subject, like a good teacher's, communicates itself to his readers. The photographs and the reproductions of James Parker's drawings have the same effect as Hughes's photographs. He even gives glimpses of similar feeling: the phrases 'small churches that speckle the secretive, folded landscape of the Welsh borderlands' and 'a place of birdsong and memory now' could have been written by Hughes. They both, in their different ways, love these churches and see them as doorways to Welsh identity.

Like Wheeler's, Kathryn Davies's *Artisan Art: vernacular wall paintings in the Welsh Marches* is specialised and, like his, it is divided in two. Half consists of chapters giving the social, economic and architectural context of domestic wall paintings in the Welsh Marches, and half consists of a catalogue of places where the paintings can be

found, each with a photograph and description. It is very thorough, and will be a useful reference book for the specialist.

This general reader, however, did not find it as exciting as the other two. There is no information about what is accessible to the public. The paintings do not have the beauty and craftsmanship of the screens to which the non-specialist can respond. Indeed, they are frequently in such poor condition that it is hard to see in them the claims made in the text. And it is a great pity Kathryn Davies did not have time to convert the discourse of the doctorate into a register that is more hospitable to the non-academic reader.

The illustrations in these three books are a powerful aid to their functions. They make one want to see, and they open one's eyes to what is there to be seen. The quality of production – paper, illustrations, binding – is high and the costs modest. Both publishers, Logaston and Seren, are to be congratulated on what they have done, and the public-spiritedness with which they have so generously honoured the riches to be found in the Marches.

