

Welcome to the Winter newsletter. It should have been the Michaelmas newsletter but as two months have elapsed since that date, we had to change the name. We begin with apologies, as we did before, for the delay in producing the newsletter.

Although we would still like to see more people using the office, we are never at a loss for things to do at Ceredigion Archives. The archives' staff are kept fully employed in the multifarious activities which maintaining a record office involve – sorting documents, listing them, cleaning them and boxing them, (and trying to find room for them in the strong-rooms !), answering queries, preparing reports and articles, giving talks, and dealing with the vast “ modern records” section of the department which the public never sees, but which we run for other departments in the county council.

Whilst we still receive many letters and phone calls asking for help with research, we find increasing numbers of e-mails arriving too. Our “electronic” address is **archives@ceredigion.gov.uk**

We have been pleased to receive some further documents from the National Library of Wales. Some of you may be aware of the Library's new collection policy, whereby they concentrate on acquiring records of a national importance and encourage records of a local nature to be deposited in county record offices. Several interesting items have come to us via that route, and we hope for others in the future (see the list of “recent accessions”). We hope to receive the surviving Quarter Sessions records for the county shortly, which will be a fine addition to our collections.

Helen has been allowed out-and-about and has attended various courses and seminars. There is such a lot to learn ! Recently there has been a seminar about the Freedom of Information Act, which will be implemented soon (and may provide an interesting challenge to the record-keeping abilities of public bodies !), a session on using computers to make records more accessible, a seminar on “de-acidification” (documents produced after 1850 often have a high acid content in the paper which causes the document to become brown and brittle – one of the most challenging aspects of modern document conservation), and

the Welsh Society of Archivists' Day School for people involved with the conservation of documents. Helen attended seminars on the problems involved in moving a repository (yes please!), on a survey of conservation needs in records offices and libraries, and a harrowing description of working in the archives and museums of Sarajevo in the 1990s, trying to preserve the cultural heritage of a country at war.

"Best Value" – mentioned in the last newsletter – is still with us, and has now been joined by the notion of "Business Planning" whereby the council is divided into business " units" for the purpose of administrative efficiency. Seeing new initiatives come and go in local government can be quite an absorbing hobby...

We are hoping to receive a new storage depot for our modern records shortly. These are the semi-current records of the county council which must be kept for legal reasons, and we store them for other council departments. We are rather pleased and excited about this, as there is so very little space left in the strongrooms, and we want more archives !

Please remember that we are always happy to hear from you – news, views, or interesting notes about the history of the county – and we may be able to include items in this newsletter.

As this newsletter is so regrettably late, the Christmas newsletter may become the early-in-the-new-year letter. May we therefore take this opportunity to wish you a merry Christmas and a happy new year !

Selected Recent Accessions

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| 1195 | Minute books and correspondence of the Llanon Anglo-Welsh Society 1969 –1992 |
| 1196 | Electoral register for Aberystwyth Borough 1865-1866 |
| 1199 | Transparencies of the Rheidol Railway 1970s-1980s |
| 1200 | Further items for the "Passmore Collection" which is |
| 1203 | mostly concerned with the history of the New Quay area. |
| 1225 | |



1900.



1900.

The Doctor's first ally.



The Cook's right hand.

XMAS. FRUIT

WELL SELECTED

BY

BOWEN BROS.

CARDIGAN.

Notwithstanding the rumour of Famine, we have been able to obtain a good variety of

Currants, Raisins, Sultanas, AND PEEL.

The reduction we make in Sugar will compensate you for the slight difference in price of Fruit.

USE ONLY

NATION'S BAKING & EGG POWDER

FREE FROM ALUM.

WE confidently believe that a careful comparison of Quality and Prices will confirm you that we maintain our reputation of

LEADING THE TRADE!!

CURRANTS:	RAISINS:	SULTANAS:	SPICES:	PROVISIONS:
<p>The Crop is less than a third the average, the Percentage appearing early in the garden and being green up to the vines, consequently prices are not on the popular basis of past years. But the hopes of speculators who bought Currants they did not require, thinking to get very high prices has not been realized, and prices are still within the reach of all lovers of Plum Pudding.</p> <p>Fair 5d. Good 6d. Very Good 7d. Extra choice 8d.</p>	<p>There is a very fine crop of Raisins, and given an average crop of Currants, there would be very cheap. As it is, prices have slightly advanced in sympathy with Currants. There is an unusual amount of this damaged Fruit on the Market, which consumers should avoid.</p> <p>Fair 3d. & 4d. Good 5d. Choice (selected). Fine flavour 6d.</p>	<p>A small crop. High prices were threatened. But thanks again to the speculators, whose schemes like that of mice, is "going up agley," and we are able to quote as under:</p> <p>Good 6d. & 7d. Extra Choice (selected)... 8d.</p>	<p>Nutmegs, Cinnamon, Mace, Cloves, Peppercorn, Ginger, &c., whole and ground.</p> <p>MINCE MEAT: C. & B's 1st 10 1/2d. 2nd 1s. 3d. Also, Very Good 1st ... 6d. " 2nd 1s.</p>	<p>BACON AND HAMS. Windsor: Smoked, English Pale Cure, Canadian.</p> <p>CHEESE Stilton, Cheddar (Price Dairy), Gorgonzola, Truette, Caspilly, Canadian.</p> <p>PURE LARD. In Bladders and by the Pound.</p>

PEEL (selected):
Mixed Lemon, Orange, Citron 4 1/2d.
Do. Kestler's Boxes ... 5 1/2d.

PLUM PUDDING:
In 1lb, 2lb, and 3lb sizes (very convenient for single persons and small families.)

BOWEN BROS.' COFFEE is Roasted every Fortnight.

SPILLERS & BAKERS, LIMITED,

CARDIFF, BRISTOL, & NEWCASTLE-ON-TYNE.

Millers, Corn Merchants, and Biscuit Manufacturers,

Original introducers of the celebrated REDTIE Flour, made by them at their Bristol Mills, and kept in Stock by all the leading Grocers and Flour Dealers in the District.
Trow Meal, Victoria Dog Biscuits, &c.

DESSERT & GOODIES:

<p>Muscatsels. Fine, 1/- Choice, 1/1.</p> <p>Almonds. Valencia, 1/8. Jordan (good) 2/-; Superior, 2/3.</p> <p>Dates. 1/4d. 1/2d. 3/4d. 1/2d. 1/2d.</p>	<p>Plums & Prunes. In Cartons (about 15)..... 8d. Loose..... 6d. and 7d. 1/2d. In 2lb Bottles..... 2/- and 2/6.</p> <p>Figs. Boxes..... 4 1/2d., 6d., 10d., 1/-, & 2/- Preserved Figs (something new) 2lb boxes, 19 1/2d. 3 1/2d., 6d., and 8d. 1/2d.</p>	<p>Nuts. Barcelons 1 1/2d. 1/2d. Christians 1d. Walnuts 1d. & 6d. Cokewals 2d. each.</p> <p>Preserved Ginger. (Crystallized & Dry)... Various Prices.</p>	<p>Preserved Fruit. (Crystallized and Glacé) Pears... Apricots... Cherries... Apples.</p> <p>Grapes, Apples, Oranges, At Lowest Market Prices, consistent with Quality and Condition.</p>
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PRICE'S CANDLES AND NIGHT LIGHTS.

CRACKERS AND NOVELTIES.

Finest SAUSAGES, Fresh daily.

SMOKE RINGER'S Superfine AND VIRGINIA RETURNS.
"There's no slag like Ringer's"

The Conscientious and Curious Cleric

The parish registers of Llanbadarn Trefeglwys in the nineteenth century.

In these days of genetic testing we are all beginning to realise that we inherited more from our ancestors than simply the size and shape of our noses. If we are interested to know whether we have inherited a condition from our ancestors it can be a tricky business to find out. In the absence of individual medical notes, usually all that is available is (since 1837) the "cause" section on a death certificate. Finding out causes of death by purchasing certificates is an expensive business and not open to most of us. Parish registers can provide some clues; an unusually large number of children dying at the same time for instance indicates a possible epidemic but by and large the evidence is unsatisfactory.

Family historians whose relatives died in Llanbadarn Trefeglwys during the period March 1846 to April 1870 are in an enviable position for, during those years, the Rev. James James, who became Vicar in 1837, noted down the cause of death against each burial entry. There was a precedent for him to follow as in September 1824 the then vicar noted that a John Morris had been ' murdered on the high road near his own house.' The Rev James had already shown an interest in such matters during his years as curate of the same parish, recording on 14 February 1837 beside the burial entries for Eleanor Evans, 23, and her sister Jane, 21, of Cefnwrthaglen that 'both sisters died of scarlet fever and were buried the same day close to each other in the same grave.' In May 1836 he also noted that the 2 year old David Evan of Penllyn Pennant had ' drowned in the mill pond.' On occasion he also makes notes in the baptismal register as at the christening of Mary and Margaret Davies, twin daughters of a shoemaker from Frongoy whose... 'mother 27 years of age lay dead in the house when the children were baptized having been born only 3 hours before'. A more acerbic note is discernable in his entry for the Christmas day baptism in 1869 of an illegitimate child of Hannah Morgan by David James where their abode is given simply as 'Sodom'. A happier event though is the baptism of in 1851 of the third set of twins to be born to the Joshua family of Blaenerthy

But it was not until March 1846 that he began to give a cause of death for each and every burial. There are approximately 326 burials to which he has

appended a cause of death and of these 84 died of 'old age'. Although there must have been another cause of death the Rev James clearly felt that once the Biblical span of three score and ten had been achieved the Grim Reaper did not need a reason to call. He did, however, note that the 97 year old Mary Evans of Crossty Bach was 'the oldest ever buried at Llanbadarn.' It is interesting to note that whilst 26 women lived to be 80 and over, only 16 men managed the same feat.

For those under seventy the causes of death were many and various. John Davies of Cwm died in January 1850 of 'sudden mortification supposed from the sting of an adder.' In 1878 Evan Evans of Mynydd Bach died age 50 and his entry is accompanied by the cryptic note 'reputed witchcraft.' Mynydd Bach clearly had a reputation for occult activity since one of Rev. James's earliest notes concerned the death of Mary Jeremiah a 27 year old woman from Mynydd Bach who was buried in June 1840 having been '... bewitched a little before her death and in grief from this she died.' Similarly intriguing is the entry for William Evans of Cefngws who was drowned in the river Aeron on his way home from the local Hiring fair, 'some dispose accidentally, some designedly'. Rev. James also records the only fatal traffic accident in Llanbadarn Treglwys during these years when Catherine Jenkins of Berthlwyd was buried in December 1858 after dying from a 'fright from a fall from horseback by a cart running into her'. Rev. James seems to have believed that some of the deaths amongst the 'middle aged' were the result of factors specific to the location. There are at least 6 deaths from asthma and beside one such burial in 1853 he notes that it is '... the third who died from similar disease by living too near the river'. Amongst the very young the causes of death reflect our understanding of community health in the mid nineteenth century. During roughly the same period Rev. James baptised 212 children. Amongst these children the commonest cause of death for newborns was given as 'convulsions'. Many of these 24 deaths would probably have been febrile convulsions brought on by high fever following infection. The Rev. James also notes that 5 children died of 'worm fever'; this seems to have been a recognised illness of infancy which also gave rise to convulsions as The Dictionary of Daily Wants, a compendium of matters of Domestic Utility published in 1858 suggests that it be treated by 'a strong aperient powder of jalap, scammony and calomel'. The effects of such a combination of strong

laxatives on a sick child must often have proved more lethal than the disease itself.

Nineteen children died of croup which the same publication describes as 'one of the **most** fatal of all the maladies to which childhood is subject... the disease almost always proving fatal - when unrelieved - within three days.' Once again the designated treatment is both harsh and woefully inadequate even supposing the parents had the knowledge or the money to put it into practice.

Bare statistics conceal much human misery. Families often suffered multiple tragedies like the Lewis family of Frongoy whose sad history can be traced through the registers. The baptismal register for 27 June 1849 shows an entry for Hannah, daughter of William Lewis, who farmed at Frongoy, and his wife Eleanor, which is endorsed 'the 7th daughter'. A year later a son was finally born only to die of croup two years later; within a month the same disease claiming his 6 year old sister. Three more sons and three more daughters were born to the Lewis's, now at Wernddu, but another son died of croup in February 1855 in the same outbreak which also claimed the three little Lewis girls of Monachty Bach - probably his cousins. The whole story comes to a shocking conclusion in May 1867 when William Lewis is buried age 57. Rev. James's notes read 'Felo de se ... buried privately, suicide.' There is a curious postscript to this tale as in May 1872 Hannah 'the 7th daughter' has baptised her illegitimate son William Lewis by William Thomas of Brysig Bach who is described as being 'in school in Carmarthen'.

The major infectious diseases which swept through the towns and cities with such ferocity made little impact on Llanbadarn Trefeglwys. Only 9 cases of death due to typhus are recorded and it seemed to strike in small pockets as with Margaret Jones and her sister Anne who died within a month of each other in summer 1855. Rev James's note suggests that they probably caught the disease in London 'having been there only 3 months'. Or the Lott family of Pantgwyn who lost two small boys to typhus within 10 days in early 1870. Only one case of diphtheria is recorded and one death from rickets; a disease of deprivation which was endemic amongst the poor but which rarely proved fatal.

Accidents accounted for only three children during this period. David Evans of Nebo was buried in 1865, age 7 months: 'Burnt to death in the

absence of the mother'. Fire also killed 3 year old Anne Thomas of Pennant in 1851 and it is, perhaps, surprising that there were not more such deaths given the use of open fires for both warmth and cooking in these overcrowded cottages.

Poor little David Davies of Maesllyn was buried in 1867 at just 3 months old killed by 'maternal neglect', whilst the 4 year old Ann Morgan of Pennant simply died of being 'illegitimate'.

Rather surprisingly only 4 women died in childbirth. But an Eleanor Jones, age 44, of Lanllywd who died in December 1851 is described as having died of 'an excess of grief after a child'. She was the wife of the Rector of Towyn and her 12 year old son David Lloyd Jones had died in September 1850 from "inflammation of the throat."

As might be expected in a rural Cardiganshire parish tuberculosis was ever present in the community. The disease is never named as such by the Rev. James; he prefers the term 'decline' which was a recognised euphemism for this cruel illness. During the years in which he kept detailed records approximately 60 people died. One of them was Richard Lewis formerly of Monachty Bach and father of the three little girls who died of croup; he was buried in 1858 aged only 36. T.B. is a highly infectious disease and often spread through a family as it seems to have done with the Evans's of Pennant. First to die in December 1856 was Ann Evans, age 27 whose death from 'decline' was '...hastened by childbirth.' She is followed a month later by her year old son who dies of croup. Two years later her husband Isaac also dies of a 'decline' at only 32. Childbirth was known to exacerbate consumption and in early 1850 there is a similar case in which Mary Griffiths of Rhos dies of a 'decline' followed by her 3 week old son Henry who expires of 'convulsions'.

Only once does Rev. James make any comment upon the emotional state of these doomed young people and then it is in terms of conventional Victorian piety. Against the burial record of Elizabeth Thomas, age 26, who died in December 1867 he writes 'Decline, well prepared to die'.

There are, of course, limitations to the accuracy of the information provided by Rev. James. We do not know, for instance, whether he made his diagnosis from personal observation or if he used the 'official' cause of death on the certificate. Many of the causes of death which he cites would

now be seen as symptoms of another underlying disease; dropsy, convulsions and worms for example. But despite these qualifications the Rev. James's efforts still constitute a unique picture of the patterns of living and dying in one small Cardiganshire parish over nearly a quarter of a century.

Gwyneth Roberts

