

# BRECKNOCK SOCIETY AND MUSEUM FRIENDS

## REVIEW OF *BRYCHEINIOG*

### Purpose of the Journal

The purpose of the Journal is to act as a focus for the accumulation of knowledge and thought in relation to the archaeology, history, geology, natural history, arts and literature of the historic county of Brecknock

### 1. Background

Since the publication of the first volume of the Society's Journal, *Brycheiniog* in 1955, the world has changed immeasurably. To reflect this, the Executive Council of the Brecknock Society & Museum Friends decided that a review of the purpose, content, format and design of *Brycheiniog* was timely, to ensure that it continues to make a significant and stimulating contribution to the study of the historic county of Brecknock.

The issues covered included:

- The purposes of the journal: Is it sufficiently comprehensive in terms of coverage of the various features of Brecknock as outlined above? Does it meet the expectations of existing and potential researchers and readers, as individual subscribers and as library users?
- The characteristics of the journal: for example, is there an appropriate balance between original pieces of research and review articles? Is the author base sufficiently wide?
- The design and layout of the journal: Are appropriate decisions being made in respect of matters such as the relative use of colour and B&W photographs, the use of appendices etc.

Other matters assessed include the continuing requirement (or otherwise) for a hard copy publication; If there is such a requirement, how long should it be before a volume goes on line?

How does *Brycheiniog* compares with other current publications with a focus on a particular geographical area? What is the scope for widening the non-member subscriber base?

### 2. Methodology

The Executive Council of the Society appointed a small Review Sub-Group to take forward the Review which was chaired by John Gibbs with Nigel Clubb and Elizabeth Siberry as members. The Sub-Group met five times in 2014-15.

To support and inform the Review process, a main element in the Review was a Consultation over the Summer of 2014, based on a Questionnaire. A full report by Nigel Clubb and Sophie Houlton on the responses to the Questionnaire is attached as an **Appendix** to this Review report, which contains the Highlights of the analysis of the Questionnaires and full details of them. The total number of respondents to the Questionnaire was 41, (21 replied by hard-copy and 12 replied electronically). The Sub-Group is extremely grateful to all those who responded to the Questionnaire who should find that their views are reflected in the **Appendix**. The responses have been considered fully by the Sub-Group and taken into account in drafting the recommendations in this Report.

In addition to the Questionnaire responses, members of the Sub-Group have had a number of discussions, both within and outside the Society. Externally, the objective of these has been to establish what other similar Journals at national and local level are planning in terms of digital access. Specific conversations have been held with the London Library, the Library of the Society of Antiquaries of London and the National Library of Wales.

### 3. Consultation Sample

The Sub-Group is pleased with the number of responses to the Consultation Questionnaire and the diversity of views expressed. It appears that the majority of the Questionnaires were received from individuals who are already members of the Society and/or subscribers to *Brycheiniog* and who already have an affinity with the Journal. Less well represented are heritage professionals working in and around the county, such as museum

curators, archaeologists, archivists, librarians and conservation officers, as well as teachers. Similarly, fewer responses came from readers and contributors from outside the county. We return to this theme in Section 12 below (Ongoing Review)

#### 4. Content of *Brycheiniog*

Following evaluation of the responses to the questionnaire and deliberations of the review group we make the following points about the content.

**The Editorial:** This should be quite short to draw attention to any specific issues that relate to the editorial role. It should outline special features of interest in the volume

**The Chairman's report.** This would be a new feature to cover important developments in the BS&MF in the calendar year that has just ended

**The Curator's report.** This should cover matters to do with the running of the Museum during the calendar year. Acquisitions should be described and the opportunity taken to excite people with the way in which study of the collections is providing new information and insights

**The Archive report:** In recent years archive reports have covered information largely available elsewhere. It should be noted that lists of articles pertaining to Wales (including Brecknock) are published in the *Welsh History Review* and *Archaeology Cambrensis*

**Book Reviews.** There is much support for book reviews and they should be a regular feature. Publishers will need to be alerted to the need to provide review copies. These could well include reviews of fiction pertaining to the county

**Index.** We do not favour an index at the end of each volume or producing a volume devoted to an index of the last 16 years (i.e. since volume XXX which indexed all the previous volumes). All volumes up to 2003 have been digitised by the National Library and this makes them fully searchable. We propose that a list of articles and authors for all non-digitised volumes should be placed on the web-site, where it will be searchable. See section 8 for further discussion of the position with the digitisation of the post-2003 volumes.

**Articles.** The core of any volume is its articles. It is vital that all articles are presented in such a way as to help readers engage with them and to enjoy the experience!

This topic is covered below under several subheadings..

Subject matter. Most articles are likely to be in the disciplines of history and archaeology . We support the idea of articles on the arts, literature, geology and natural history as long as the relevance to Brecknock is evident .

Nature of the articles. Most articles will be based on original research or personal experience. Review articles are acceptable if they bring new perceptions to bear or if they present complicated fields of study in a digestible way.

Length and character. Long and short articles are equally acceptable (although *Hanes* is probably the right place for snippets of information). So are personal reminiscences, providing they have originality and authority (see below)

Balance and Authority. All articles must be objective and soundly based. Statements must be supported by evidence

Language(English v Welsh). We encourage the submission of some articles in Welsh. If accepted the author will be expected to produce a translation in English for publication on the web-site

Geographical Cover - Seven respondents to the Questionnaire commented on geographical cover. Several felt that the Journal did not reflect the extreme North, South and West areas of Brecknock as well as the more central areas. The Journal can, of course, only reflect the contributions offered to it and this may partly indicate the areas of greater population. However, the Sub-Group is aware of this issue and will encourage contributions from all areas of Brecknock

Correspondence re articles Letters about previous articles will be welcomed and published at the discretion of the Editor

#### 5. Balance between 'learned/academic' articles and more 'popular' contributions

The analysis of the consultation questionnaire reveals that the area where a polarisation of views was most evident was whether *Brycheiniog* should focus on becoming a more learned/academic Journal or become more popular. Our view is that the value of *Brycheiniog* to present and future audiences will be greatest if it steers a course between

these two options. We believe that the Journal should continue to encourage articles which are academic in nature, that is based on either {a} original research or {b} a synthesis of existing knowledge providing new insights into the subject - both types of article should be accompanied by comprehensive references to original and secondary sources. We also consider that authors should provide an introduction to their articles in order to help the reader - who may have no or little background in that topic.

We also believe that the Journal should encourage articles not necessarily based on original research or synthesis of existing knowledge, but which may be based on more personal observation or experience. The test for acceptance in the Journal should be whether an article makes a distinct contribution to the knowledge of contemporary audiences and to future generations. Such articles may provide a record of experiences and impressions ; these may not otherwise survive for posterity and a more flexible and proportionate approach may be adopted to references to original and secondary sources.

## 6. Presentation and Appearance

**Appearance** The general appearance of the most recent issue with its mixture of colour versus B&W plates, use of maps and figures is a satisfactory model for the future. Paper quality is good. Enquiry will be made into the possibility of using a larger font size.

**Illustrations.** The term 'Figure' will be used both for line drawings and photographs

**Dust wrapper.** The colour wrapper will be retained.

**Notes** The practice of using endnotes (rather than footnotes) for references etc. should be retained.

**Lay-out** Authors will be asked to use sub-headings in all but fairly short articles. These will include 'Introduction' and 'Conclusions'. The author must use the Introduction effectively, recognising that most potential readers will not be experts in the field. The Board has no strong views on the benefit of an Abstract.

**Authorship** In future the authors' names will appear after the title and, at the discretion of the author, a postal address and/or e-mail address. The biographical note will appear at the end of the paper (rather than on a separate page at the front of the volume.

## 7. Brycheiniog subscribers and readers

Brycheiniog has a diverse subscriber/purchaser base totaling 250 copies in 2014.

The majority of **individual subscribers** (over 60) pay by standing order and are members of the Brecknock Society but some individuals only subscribe to the Journal.

Some copies of Brycheiniog are sold by local **bookshops** eg in Brecon; there are **institutional subscribers** –most Welsh Universities; some **public libraries** in Wales eg Powys and Merthyr Tydfil; **heritage professionals** such as the Clwyd Powys Archaeological Trust and Powys Archives and **learned societies** such as the Society of Antiquaries in London. Some universities in England such as Leicester and Birmingham also subscribe as does the private London Library and copies are sent to the **copyright libraries**-Cambridge University Library, Bodleian Library Oxford, British Library, National Library Wales, National Library Edinburgh.

For no doubt historical reasons, the Roemisch Germanische Kommission is also a subscriber but there appear to be no other mainland European or transatlantic subscribers.

**Library copies** mean that articles reach a wider audience in hard copy. It is impossible to quantify this but the library readership is important.

Moreover copies up to 2003 are also available **on line** via the National Library of Wales website (Welsh journals on line). This is important not only because of wider direct access to the articles in the first 35 volumes but also because the material is available for wider content search through Google and other search engines. This means that a reader/researcher can access material in articles by name, place or subject search without requiring an article reference.

The policy agreed in the 2008 agreement between the Brecknock Society and the National Library of Wales was that volumes should be accessible on line with a five year embargo. This means that volumes 36-41 should/could be available from 2015 and, since funding/resources are probably the reason for the 'delay', a case could be made for the Society to provide some funds to enable this and ensure the maximum number of volumes is available to the wider world.

**Some thoughts for the future** - A survey of why individuals/institutions buy Brycheiniog might, in financially challenging times, produce cancellations rather than additional orders but there are some 'gaps' which may be worth pursuing.

### **Universities**

The current university subscribers are Leicester, Birmingham, London, Aberystwyth, Cardiff, University of Wales Gregynog and Swansea. This therefore does not include Bangor or Lampeter and the post 1992 Welsh universities eg Glyndwr and South Wales. The Celtic Studies departments in Cambridge and Oxford are covered by the copyright libraries but there are Celtic Studies departments in for example Aberdeen, Glasgow, Edinburgh, Liverpool and Belfast. The Society is also building links with the Centre for Advanced Welsh and Celtic Studies in Aberystwyth and there are Celtic Studies departments in eg US- Harvard and Berkeley.

### **Schools**

School libraries will have limited budgets but one might expect eg Christ's College to be a subscriber.

### **Bookshops**

**Brycheiniog** is sold in some but not all local bookshops and perhaps this could be encouraged (especially with there being no museum shop at present). 'Bookish' in Crickhowell has recently agreed to stock it. There may be scope for sales in Hay (Experience at the Hay Festival has been disappointing).

It is likely that, as other respects, the Southern part of Powys is better represented in terms of sales outlets than the North and West.

### **Publication options**

Some journals are now published in both hard copy and digital versions and it is worth considering the options and costs of simultaneous digital publication.

It is proposed that contributors should receive 4 offprints, instead of an additional copy of the volume and that further copies can be purchased (as at present). Longer term there may also be scope for producing offprints for general sale of some more significant articles. This is already under consideration for the Liz Pitman article on the Brute family of memorial sculptors.

## **8. Requirements for Digital and Hard-copy Access**

The response to the Consultation Questionnaire demonstrates that while most respondents are content with the current publication requirements, there is a recognition that on-line access is likely to become more important over time and is likely to be a major factor in reaching younger and worldwide audiences.

While we propose to maintain hard-copy as the primary method of publication of *Brycheiniog*, at the same time we will encourage the National Library of Wales to ensure that previous volumes up to five years are available on-line through their web-site as originally agreed and set out above. We will also keep the changing situation under review. In particular, modern technology means that the Journal's articles are created in digital form, so in theory publishing these on-line is not necessarily such a technical leap forward. However, new funding models would be necessary to support simultaneous digital and hard copy publication.

Over the coming months we propose that we should explore the services offered by publishers who take on the publishing and marketing role for Societies such as ours. Clearly in return they would require a percentage of the income generated. We will need to understand the potential financial impact of such arrangements and, indeed, whether they would judge our Journal to be suitable for publication and promotion in this way. Our approach to such opportunities will be exploratory, but cautious, not considering any measures which would be unsatisfactory for our current readership, or the current funding arrangements for the Journal

## 9. Working with other history groups in Brecknock

We have taken account of views expressed in the consultation that the Society needs to support the work of the Brecknock History Forum, including the publication of *Hanes*. We fully believe in then potential for working with partners on the potential for developing a more popular web-based and/or conventional magazine, which could cater for more accessible and ephemeral contributions to the heritage of Brecknock, although we do not believe that the Society alone has the capacity at present to produce two distinct regular publications. We do believe that the opening of the redeveloped Museum should provide a catalyst for the growth of interest in the history of the county and that options should be kept under review in this context.

## 10. The process of editing *Brycheiniog*

In general, we believe that the Society has access to individuals from most fields able to read articles and assess their suitability for the Journal, either from within its membership, or elsewhere in our sector.

The *Guidance for Contributors to Brycheiniog* needs to be reviewed and rewritten. In particular:

-The *Guidance* must reflect our approach to {a} the Content of the Journal and {b} the Balance between the more ‘learned/academic’ and the more ‘popular’ approach as expressed in the relevant sections in this Review above.

-It should make clear to contributors that the response from the Editorial Team will be one of the following:

- Agreed for publication as submitted
  - Agreed for publication, but minor restructuring, rewriting and/or additional analysis required
  - Article judged as potentially interesting, but significant restructuring, rewriting and/or additional analysis required. In this case a mentor might be nominated to work with the author
  - Rejected, but possibly with other avenues for publication/dissemination suggested and/or suitable activities to develop the author’s work and interests.
- A partial revision of the *Guidance* is attached as an Appendix (not yet prepared)

## 11. Editorship

The Editor of *Brycheiniog* oversees the editorial content of the Journal and supervises editorial activity associated with the annual cycle of Journal production. The Editor should also have an ambassadorial role in promoting and representing the Journal in relation to contributors, referees, the publisher and societies with an interest in the heritage of Brecknock and the wider existing and potential readership.

In addition to the long-standing and much valued post of Deputy Editor, the society should create an Editorial Board to provide intellectual and practical support to the Editor. It will comprise at least four members, two of whom should be members of the Executive Council. In addition a list will be created of people willing and able to act as referees for articles submitted to the Editor.

The Review Board will prepare a job description and a ‘person specification’, It will also propose procedures for advertising the post and assessing the suitability of candidates.

At the January 15<sup>th</sup> Council meeting it was agreed that the scale of Honorarium for the Editor Post should be tailored to the circumstances of the person taking the post.

## 12. Ongoing Review

The Sub-Group is acutely aware that a Review such as this can only represent a snapshot in time, given that we live in an age of rapid technological change. In order to ensure that the interest in the heritage of Brecknock continues into future generations, we recommend that Review of *Brycheiniog* should be undertaken again in around 3-5 years time. However, ongoing dialogue with existing and potential readers and contributors will be necessary in the meantime. We suggest that this should focus on groups not currently so well represented in the Questionnaire sample, for example heritage and education professionals working in and around the county, as well as readers and

contributors who live outside the historic county.

We should also keep under review our arrangements for on-line access to the Journal, especially if new business models enable us to safeguard, and even increase, our income

John Gibbs  
Elizabeth Siberry  
Nigel Clubb

February 2015