

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

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

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

*Extraordinary General Meeting of the Society held on 8<sup>th</sup> December 2015 at The Muse, Glamorgan Street*

At this very well-attended meeting, Nigel Blackamore for Powys County Council (PCC), Mervyn Bramley and I briefed members on the current position with the detailed design of the Brecon Cultural Hub (BCH) and the gap that had developed between the confirmed budget of £9.4M and current estimated costs. Members agreed that the Society must do everything possible to work with the PCC, HLF and other funders to secure additional funding and deliver the project. The following resolution was passed unanimously: "that the Executive Council is authorised to commit further funding of up to £70,000 from the Society to the budget for the refurbished Museum & Art Gallery and the new shared facilities within the Brecon Cultural Hub project. The actual commitment must be justifiable in the light of other funders' contributions and the estimated project costs. It must be used for delivering visible and relevant items that are a credit to the Society's Aims and Objectives."

In the closing discussion I said that I would immediately write to PCC confirming the Society's commitment to the additional funding. I was commissioned to request reassurances from PCC with regard to holding regular progress meetings; engagement with and support from stakeholders and elected representatives; and communication with the Breconshire community. A strong wish was expressed that PCC keep Kirsty Williams involved in the project. As our Welsh Assembly Member, she supported the original HLF bid in 2013 and could help in ensuring the best possible support from Welsh Government and its non-departmental bodies, like Cadw, in the tight project programme. Any member wishing to see a full Minute of the EGM should contact me, otherwise copies will be available at our AGM.

I am pleased to report that regular progress meetings are now scheduled and that PCC's Breconshire Committee of councillors has now been formally briefed about the current position with the project.

*Activity since the EGM*

Mervyn Bramley as our Executive Council's link with the BCH Project writes: "Many of you will have seen the reports in the Brecon and Radnor Express in January 2016 about the funding gap, which concluded in reporting the positive views of PCC's Cabinet about the likely success of the bid for additional HLF funding. As of 30 January, all I can say is that all the funders are extremely hopeful that an overall additional package of £748,000 will be assembled. A press release will be issued by the lead funders PCC and HLF as and when the details are finalised. The strong words of support for this 'flagship project' from both Cabinet and Councillors at PCC's January Council meeting were reassuring to the other co-funders at this time of financial stringency within public authorities.

So where does the project now stand in terms of a start to work on site, and what further pitfalls could there be? First, the PCC project team, which includes consultants Jacobs, architect Powell Dobson and main contractor Kier, must finish sufficient detailed design and tendering to limit uncertainty in the estimated overall project cost. Second, PCC's Cabinet needs to take a final decision, as lead funder, to underwrite this overall project cost. Hopefully, with the additional funding commitments (which include an allowance for contingencies), this will proceed satisfactorily but there could be problems if some of the tendered prices prove higher than expected. Third, the project team need to finalise ('discharge') with the BBNPA and Cadw the significant number of planning conditions listed in the planning permission. Provided that everything goes to plan, we should see the hoarding going up around the BCH site during April 2016 to meet the very firm target of contractors actually working on site by 30 April."

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

One other topic discussed at the EGM concerned the idea of an appeal for funds to the membership. It was agreed then that such an appeal would best be made once the core funding for the project had been established. However, if anyone would like to pursue the matter further with me now, do please get in touch (details at the top of the page).

**Meeting on Tuesday February 23rd 2016 (Not February 16<sup>th</sup> as stated in the printed programme)**

**'Museums and Stories'** Mary Ann Constantine (University of Wales) 5.00 pm. The Old Museum, Glamorgan Street.

Mary-Ann Constantine has a particular interest in the late eighteenth-century – the great and obsessive era of 'collecting' which laid the foundations of the modern museum. In this talk she will bring together elements of her current interest in travel writing and collecting in Romantic-era Wales, with a more personal perspective on how museums, and the objects in them, can generate stories and exert their fascination on individuals in quite different ways. She will also talk about and read from her recently-published novel *Star-Shot*, which is set in and around the National Museum of Wales, Cardiff. We will be taking Mary Ann to a meal in a Brecon restaurant after the talk. If you would like to join us, please get in touch with me.

**The Wells of Breconshire**

Through the Brecknock History Forum, we are supporting a project on the wells of Wales with special reference to those in our area that are of religious or cultural significance. A workshop on this theme will be held in Brecon Cathedral between 10.30 a.m. and 12.00 noon on Saturday Feb 27<sup>th</sup>: all welcome. More information is available from Elaine Starling in her capacity as Secretary of the Forum (contact details below).

**The Sir John Lloyd Lecture 'The Vernacular Buildings of Breconshire'**

I enclose a flier for the lecture: please display it or pass it on to neighbours or friends. I know that many of you already have your tickets. Do please hurry to secure them if you have not. May I remind you that unless you call in person or send a stamped addressed envelope, the tickets will be held for collection on or before the night. If, having made a booking, you find that you cannot come, do please contact the Box Office to release the seat so that it can be taken by someone else. Don't forget that there will be a retiring collection in aid of our educational work.

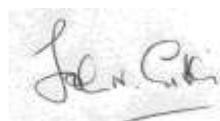
Elaine Starling has made arrangements for a post-lecture dinner (price £15.00 for main course and pudding) in Tipple & Tiffin, the theatre's restaurant. If you are interested in joining us, please contact Elaine before March 10<sup>th</sup>. (01874 711484 or [evstarling@lineone.net](mailto:evstarling@lineone.net)). After that date, you will need to contact Tipple & Tiffin direct (Tel 01874 611866 or email [info@tipplentiffin.co.uk](mailto:info@tipplentiffin.co.uk)).

**Monday April 11<sup>th</sup> *The Annual General Meeting of The Society***

2.30 pm at 'The Muse' The Old Museum, Glamorgan Street. Please regard this notification as an invitation to the meeting which is as advertised in the printed programme. Nearer the time we will send out a more complete agenda and the Society's programme for next year.

**Sunday 24 April - 3.00pm *Henry Vaughan Annual Memorial Event***

The Memorial evensong service will include the choir from the Priory Church, Abergavenny and a speaker from The Vaughan Association. There will be a wreath-laying ceremony at the poet's grave and refreshments afterwards. It is also planned to be the occasion of the launch '*Henry Vaughan and the Usk Valley*'. Look out for more details on this book!



John Gibbs